Catastrophic Leave FAQs

What is the Catastrophic Leave Bank?

The Catastrophic Leave Bank is a pool of accrued sick leave voluntarily donated by employees which may be approved for use by employees who meet catastrophic illness/injury eligibility requirements.

What is a Catastrophic Illness/Injury?

A Catastrophic Illness means a medical condition of an employee or immediate qualifying family member (spouse; child; parent; a child over age 18, or sibling if they are “incapable of self-care”), as certified by a physician that requires an employee's absence from duty for a prolonged period of time and which, except for the catastrophic leave program, would result in a substantial loss of income to the employee because of the exhaustion of all earned sick, personal and vacation leave.

Who can apply for Catastrophic Leave?

The applicant must be a regular, benefits-eligible (50% FTE or greater), employee of the University. An employee who works part-time or who is on a temporary assignment is excluded from this definition and, as such, is ineligible to participate as a donor or recipient of Catastrophic Leave.

The employee must have been employed by the University for more than one (1) year in a regular, position.

Employees must have exhausted all sick, vacation, and personal leave time, and, at the onset of the illness or injury, employee must have had to his or her credit at least eighty (80) hours of combined sick and annual leave.

Do employees donate their sick leave to a specific employee?

No. Each year the Human Resources Department solicits employees for donations to the Catastrophic Leave Bank.

How many hours of sick leave can an employees’ donate?

Employees who wish to donate accrued sick leave to the Catastrophic Leave Bank may do so in increments of not less than eight (8) hours and not more than forty-eight (48) hours each calendar year. (However, no employee shall be allowed to donate leave to the Catastrophic Leave Bank if such donation will reduce that employee's accrued sick leave balance to less than eighty (80) hours.)
Can recipients of catastrophic leave donations thank the employees who donated leave?

This is a confidential program and, therefore, there is no way to do so. However, employees can submit a “Thank You” message for "This & That" through email to: graphics@laverne.edu.

When should an employee apply for Catastrophic Leave?

As soon as it is apparent that the employee (or their qualified family member) has an injury, condition, or illness that will require the employee to be absent for a prolonged period of time in which the employee will deplete his or her sick, vacation and personal leave. (No employee shall be approved for catastrophic leave unless that employee has depleted his or her sick, vacation and personal leave and is, or is reasonably expected to be, on leave-without-pay status as a result of the catastrophic illness.)

What is a Prolonged Period of Time?

A Prolonged Period of Time means a continuous period of time (minimum of twenty (20) working days) whereby a medical condition prevents the employee from performing the employee's duties.

Are donated hours immediately transferred to an employee’s sick leave account?

Transfers are made as needed.

Are Catastrophic Leave Medical Certification and Family Medical Leave Certification the same?

Not necessarily. They are two different programs with different requirements – they do usually run concurrently.

Can an employee receive Catastrophic Leave and work when possible at the same time?

Use of leave granted will be in increments of no less than one week at a time. Intermittent or short term absences do not qualify.

What happens if an employee runs out of donations before they return to work?

Employees shall be eligible for approved catastrophic leave in excess of three (3) months (520 hours) per occurrence. Prior to exhausting donations, you should discuss the continued need for absences with the Benefits Manager in the Human Resources Department.
When are the sick hours of the donating employee moved from their account to the Catastrophic Leave Bank?

After employees complete and submit the donation form by the deadline specified each year, the Payroll Department will move the hours by the end of the next pay period. (EX: Deadline is Dec. 3rd – hours will be moved no later than Dec 31st.

When an employee receives Catastrophic Leave Donations, how are employee sick, vacation, and personal leave accruals used each month?

Each month an employee remains in paid status, they will be eligible to accrue sick, vacation, and personal leave. All accrued sick, vacation and personal leave will be utilized first. Once these hours are depleted, the Catastrophic Leave donations will be applied.

Can an employee use the Catastrophic Leave program following the birth of their children for medically disabled maternity leave?

They can apply if they exhausted their sick, vacation, and personal accruals before the end of the 6 week medically disabled maternity/recovery leave period immediately following the birth of a child. (For additional information on Leave of Absences please visit our website at: http://sites.laverne.edu/hr/human-resource-policies/ )