



NCCADV

North Carolina Coalition
Against Domestic Violence

**Pay it Forward Project
Bereavement and Compassionate Leave
Policy Development**

**Nisha Williams, NCCADV Legal Director
LEAP Cohort 9**

Radical Rest in Grief

“There is no pain so great as the memory
of joy in present grief.”

Aeschylus



What & Why

What: Bereavement Change Policy request made by Staff Member after agency passed an updated Parental Leave Policy.

Why: Grief will impact us all and taking care of staff is crucial in maintaining agency operation.



Policy Development

1. Request for Staff Feedback
2. Initial Draft made by requesting staff
3. Operations Team Review
4. Intern Onboarded
5. Intern conducts research
6. Policy Review
7. Staff Vote
8. Board Vote



Before the Policy

"Upon the death of any member of the employee's family or household an employee may take up to five days with pay within a reasonable time frame after the death occurs. Family is defined as persons who play a significant role in an employee's life, as determined by that employee. Employees are also able to take one day to attend the funeral of anyone they feel they need to attend the funeral of. If additional time is needed, employees are encouraged to use their personal time, sick leave, vacation, or leave without pay to attend to their needs in their time of grief."



Employee Feedback

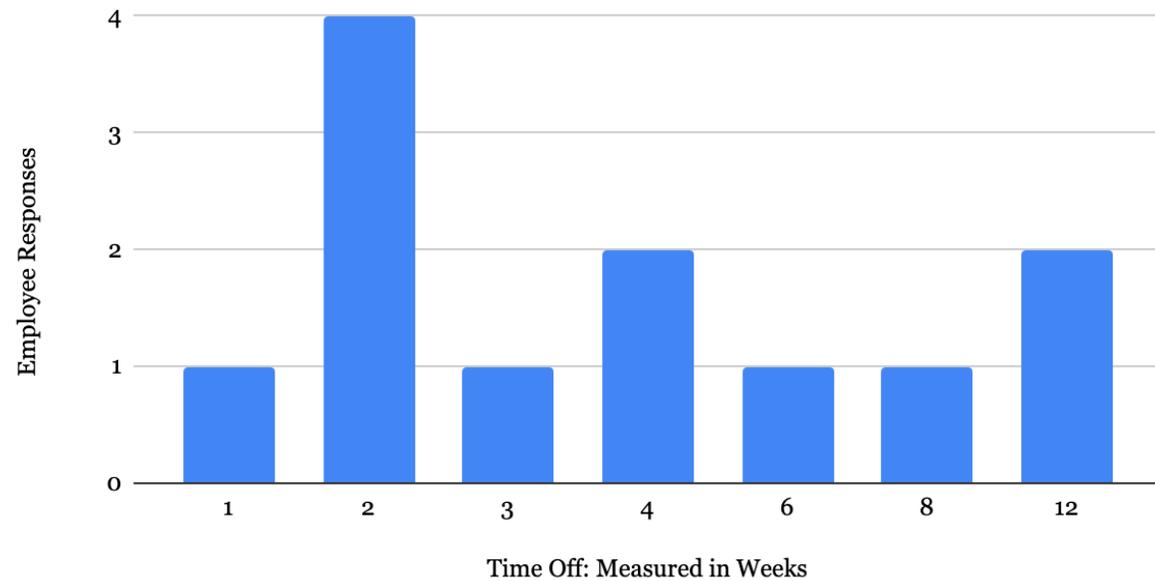
Feedback from Employee Survey

- 100% of participants responded that five days is not long enough to process their grief
- Minimum time needed?
 - Responses to this question varied from 2 weeks to 3 months
 - 75% of respondents felt employees should be allowed to take off at least 6 weeks

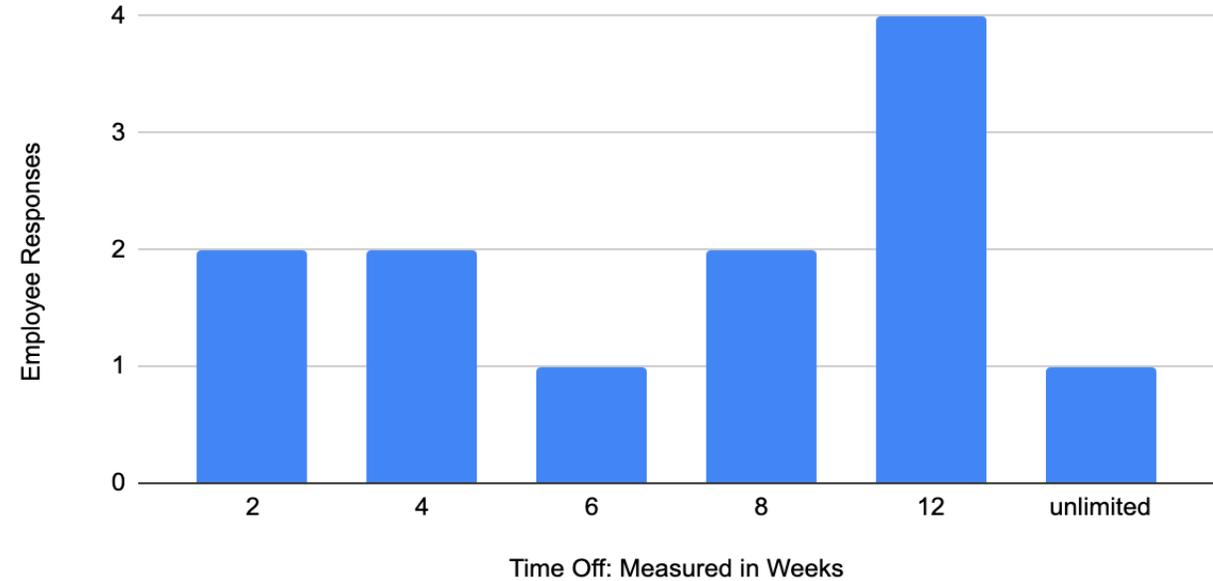


Employee Feedback Cont.

Employee Responses: Minimum Time Off for Bereavement Leave



Employee Responses: Time Off for Bereavement Leave (considering maximum parts of range)



Employee Feedback Cont.

Themes in Reasonings for Time-Off Suggestions:

- No time will be enough, but flexibility is always appreciated
- Grief is personal- different people need more time
- Traveling- funeral, visiting family, etc.
- Enough time to feel disconnected from work and tend to personal life
- Time to cater to immediate needs
 - Amount of tasks to complete after loss of a loved one
- Time to focus on traditions
- Time to find resources



Research Methods

- Work began by continuing work of Adé Oni, MariSol Rivera, and Bonnie Louthan
 - Upgraded Bereavement Policy Draft
- Compared our policy to most expansive policies in the country
 - Most expansive bereavement leave policies are usually 4 weeks (Facebook, Airbnb, etc.)
- Talked with people in grief centered and radical spaces
 - Listserv of radical HR worker
 - Collaboration with Reclaim the Block
- Researched necessity for bereavement leave policies
- Centered the policy on grief informed practices by consulting with death care professionals
 - Rae Walton from Uhuru End of Life and Grief Care in Michigan
- Collaborated with other coalition members
 - Feedback from Kathleen Lockwood, Lizzy Sager, Nisha Williams, Carianne Fisher, and Adé Oni



Main Takeaways from Research

- Grief affects everyone differently
 - Depression
 - Social isolation
 - Spiritual impacts
 - Financial impact
 - Physical health impacts
 - Increased risk of death from heart disease and suicide
 - Development of psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Disenfranchised grief often leads to compounding grief
- A lack of adequate policies “devalues the experience of grief and precludes healthy mental and physical responses” (Petry et al.)



Main Takeaways from Research

- According to “Grief: The Epidemic Within an Epidemic,” “Policies, such as paid time off and economic support payments, can promote healthy grieving and can prevent complicated or disenfranchised grief”
- On average, employees are granted 2.5 days of leave
- Often must utilize other forms of leave
- 2.5 days has been reported to be inadequate
 - “complications involved in personal losses, such as dealing with insurance companies, coordinating final arrangements (funerals, religious ceremonies), and handling family conflicts and other complications” (Tonkin, 2022)
- A lack of standardized policies leads to inequity
 - Length, distribution, pay, etc.



Comprehensive Grief Package

1. Bereavement Leave
2. Compassionate Extended Leave
3. Continuation of Work Plan
4. Return to Coalition Plan



Bereavement Leave

Purpose

- Time needed to mourn and grieve the death of the humans, animals, and the communities we love
- Includes the time needed to honor the anniversaries of these deaths
- Paid time to mourn, grieve, and reconcile with loss

Employees may have more complex and committed relationships outside the traditional notion of family

This leave gives the employee control over defining who they consider kin, family, and community.



Bereavement Leave

Details of Leave

- Granted to all employees for a maximum of 20 days (160 hours)
 - Compassionate Extended Leave, vacation, sick leave, personal time, or donated leave to meet additional leave needs after 20 days
- Can be taken all at once or in segments
- Not limited to one utilization of Bereavement Leave per year
 - Granted on a per-event basis.
- May be used for reproductive experiences that involve loss, death, and grief (i.e. miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion/termination/released pregnancy, neonatal death, etc.)



Bereavement Leave

To Access

- Communicate the following information to Executive Director or employee's direct supervisor in writing within a reasonable time frame:
 - How much leave (including the dates) initially needed
 - Name of the deceased as well as relation to the employee
 - Any travel requirements for the funeral
 - Any religious ceremonies
 - Preference for communication about cause and condition of leave with coalition members throughout the extent of employees leave
- Documentation of death is NOT required



Compassionate Extended Leave

Purpose

- An optional extension to the Bereavement Leave Policy and as the coalition's extended Sick Leave
- Examples
 - Extreme personal health issues
 - Family health circumstances/Serious condition of an employee's loved one
 - To deal with the consequences of violence
 - Intense situations of grief (including community grief)
 - Complicated grief after the loss of a close relative or loved one
 - Traveling for the funeral of a loved one
 - Reproductive experiences that involve loss, death, and grief (i.e. miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion/termination/released pregnancy, neonatal death, failed fertility treatments, etc.)



Compassionate Extended Leave

Details of Leave

- Eligible staff may take a paid leave of absence of up to eight weeks (8) (320 hours)
- May use whenever is necessary within a twelve (12) month period of first enacting the leave
 - Leave does not need to be continuous and may be taken in segments
 - May extend out from this 12-month period for
 - Cultural traditions/ Ceremonies / Events related to the grief-inducing incident
- If there is a second loss/complicated situation within a 12-month period, meet with supervisor to discuss options
 - Accommodations for employees will work to center employees' well-being while maintaining the coalition's mission
- No interruption to health care coverage or any other employer-paid benefits will be caused by an employee utilizing paid extended leave



Compassionate Extended Leave

To access

- Employee's request must be supported by substantial reasons and approved by the employee's supervisor.
 - Documentation supporting reasoning for leave required
- Leave requests must be made in writing and submitted to employee's supervisor as far in advance as possible and include the following information:
 - Anticipated length of absence;
 - Dates of when the leave is expected to begin and end; and
 - A general statement of the reason(s) for requesting the leave of absence
 - Preference for communication about the cause and condition of leave with coalition members throughout the extent of employee's leave
 - Documentation supporting reasoning of leave
 - Link to continuation of work plan
- Employees must create a Continuation of Work Plan; and
- Participate in the Return to Coalition Plan upon returning to work



Continuation of Work Plan

- The purpose of the Continuation of Work Plan is to provide the coalition with a guide on how to continue the work of the employee out on leave without having to contact the employee.
- This plan aims to decrease any additional burden put onto colleagues and streamline the transition to temporarily continuing work without the employee on leave to prevent colleague burnout and major delays in deliverables.
- Employees must create a Continuation of Work Plan in the following scenarios:
 - Utilizing the Compassionate Extended Leave for more than four consecutive weeks
 - Utilizing the Compassionate Extended Leave for at least two consecutive weeks immediately following the use of the Bereavement Leave
- The Continuation of Work Plan must be received by the end of the fourth consecutive week of utilizing the Compassionate Extended Leave or by the second consecutive week if utilizing directly after the use of the Bereavement Leave.



Continuation of Work Plan

- Written document including the following information:
 - Important deliverables that cannot be delayed
 - Including recipient contact information, deadlines, details of deliverable, work already done, and any other information necessary to complete the project
 - Any necessary account login information needed to continue work on deliverables
 - Information on upcoming meetings that a member of the coalition should attend
 - Optional: a list of tasks and deliverables that are not urgent and can be set aside until the return of the employee on leave
- Grief cannot be anticipated, and that continuing productivity is not always a priority. Employees are encouraged to always maintain a Continuation of Work plan in case of any personal tragedies.
 - Employees are encouraged to update this running Continuation of Work plan periodically



Example of Continuation of Work Plan

Continuation of Work Plan Template

Employee Name:

Title:

Anticipated dates of absence due to leave:

High Priority Projects			
Project 1	Project 2	Project 3	Project x
Description of task, important deadlines, necessary details, etc.	Description of task, important deadlines, necessary details, etc.	Description of task, important deadlines, necessary details, etc.	Description of task, important deadlines, necessary details, etc.
Main contact person + contact information			
Any other needed information			

Mandatory Meetings			
Meeting 1: Title	Meeting 2: Title	Meeting 3: Title	Meeting 4: Title
Date, time, location	Date, time, location	Date, time, location	Date, time, location
Description of meeting	Description of meeting	Description of meeting	Description of meeting
Important notes	Important notes	Important notes	Important notes

Necessary account login information:

Non-Urgent Tasks (to be set aside until return of employee):

1. X
2. Y



Return to Coalition Plan

- Meeting with Executive Director or employee's direct supervisor
- Necessary when: returning to the Coalition from Bereavement Leave or from four or more consecutive weeks of Compassionate Extended Leave
- Meeting will be as flexible as possible in terms of structure, length, and timing.



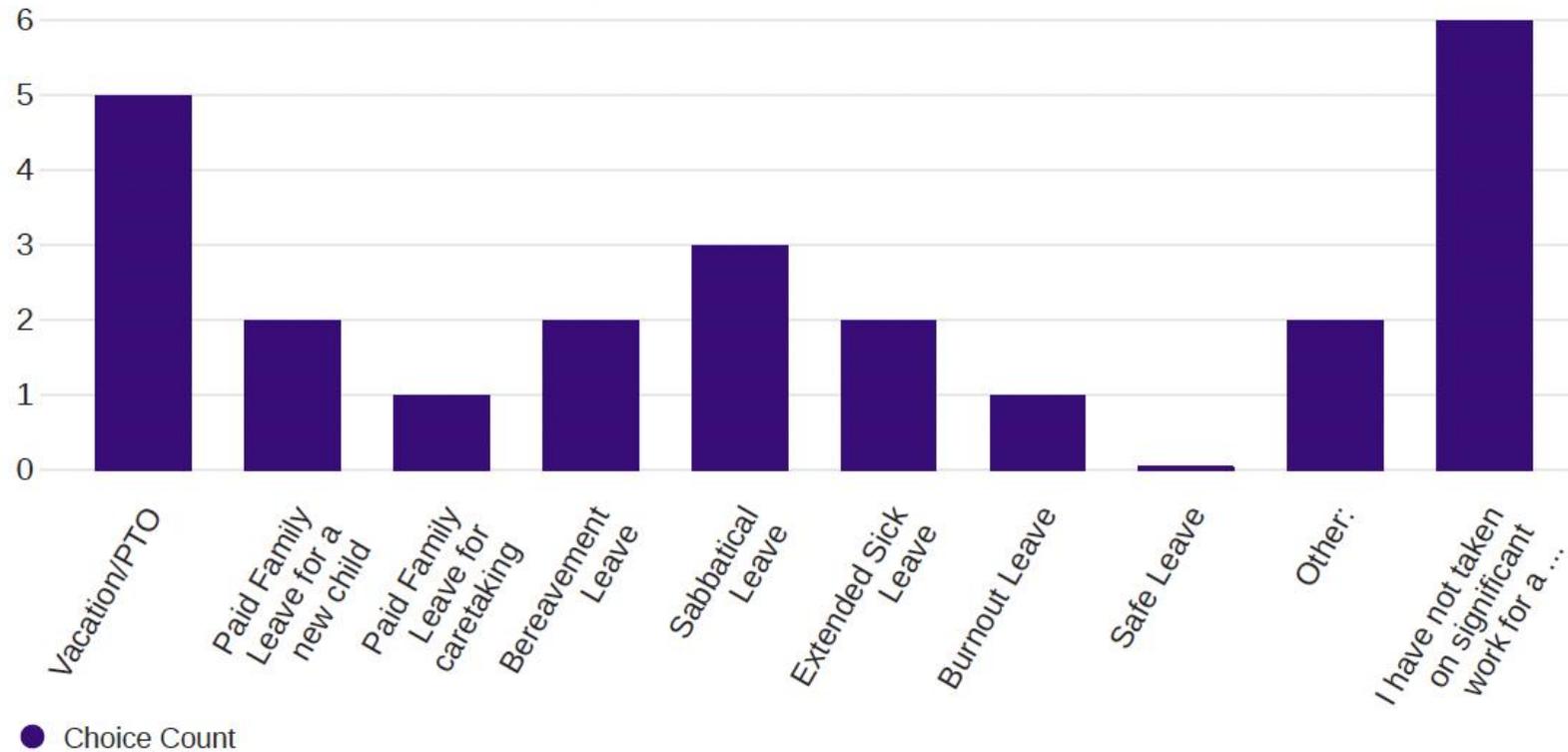
Return to Coalition Plan

- Goal: to ensure employee is receiving any support and/or resources they may need
 - Returning employee's preference for if the grief-inducing event is discussed at work and preference for setting and style of this discussion
 - Returning employee's needs as a person experiencing grief or recovering from a stressful situation. Including, flexibility in deadlines, periodic check-ins with supervisors or colleagues, preference for meeting styles and types of work assigned to the individual, etc.
 - How the coalition can best support the returning employee
 - Employees plan for reentering the coalition, including the status of projects assigned to the returning employee prior to their time away from the coalition
 - Important dates related to the grief process that the returning employee may require flexibility or extra support on



Feasibility of Package

Q14 - If you have personally taken on a significant amount of work from a colleague who has taken paid leave in the past 3 years, please indicate which kind of leave it was from the list below. (Please select all that apply.) - Selected Choice



The Board

1. Discussion & Vote
2. Next up: Yearly Evaluations



Sources

- Aoun SM, Breen LJ, Howting DA, Rumbold B, McNamara B, Hegney D (2015) Who Needs Bereavement Support? A Population Based Survey of Bereavement Risk and Support Need. PLoS ONE 10(3): e0121101. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.012110>
- Blackburn, P., & Bulsara, C. (2018). “I am tired of having to prove that my husband was dead.” Dealing with practical matters in bereavement and the impact on the bereaved. *Death Studies*, 42(10), 627–635. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2017.1415392>
- Halpern, Diane F. “How Time-Flexible Work Policies Can Reduce Stress, Improve Health, and Save Money.” *Stress & Health: Journal of the International Society for the Investigation of Stress* 21, no. 3 (August 2005): 157–68. doi:10.1002/smi.1049.
- Jacobs S. Pathologic Grief: Maladaptation to Loss. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press; 1993.
- “Navigating Grief at Work.” *Dougy Center*, <https://www.dougy.org/news-media/podcasts/navigating-grief-at-work>.
- Louthan, Bonnie, Oni, Adé, Rivera, MariSol (2022). Upgraded Bereavement Policy Draft ■ <https://nccadv.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/SurvivorWellbeing/Shared%20Documents/General/Upgraded%20Bereavement%20Policy%20draft.docx?d=wd4d8edd00ad7444b844a247af42e06f3&csf=1&web=1&e=R7FPTD>



Sources

- “Paid Extended Leave.” Reclaim the Block.
- Parkes, C. M. (1998). Coping with loss: Bereavement in Adult Life. *BMJ*, 316(7134), 856–859. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.316.7134.856>
- Petry, S. E., Hughes, D., & Galanos, A. (2020). Grief: The epidemic within an epidemic. *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*®, 38(4), 419–422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049909120978796>
- Thompson, N., & Bevan, D. (2015). Death and the Workplace. *Illness, Crisis & Loss*, 23(3), 211–225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1054137315585445>
- Tonkin, K. (2022). It IS Who You Know: The Power of Supervisors in Awarding and Administering Bereavement Leave. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228221129423>
- Wilson, D. M., Punjani, S., Song, Q., & Low, G. (2021). A Study to Understand the Impact of Bereavement Grief on the Workplace. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, 83(2), 187–197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222819846419>



QUESTION:

YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?



**THAT'S THE END OF THE
PRESENTATION**

