

WHAT WELLNESS LEAVE MEANS FOR EDUCATORS

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The Civil Service Commission (CSC) has introduced a new Wellness Leave policy granting eligible government workers up to five (5) days of leave annually separate from regular vacation and sick leave, aimed at supporting employees' mental and physical well-being. The policy, approved under CSC Resolution No. 2501292 and embodied in CSC Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 2026, allows government personnel to take the leave either as up to three consecutive days or in non-consecutive increments throughout the year. Wellness Leave can be used for reasons such as mental health care, physical wellness activities, or simply for rest and recovery from work demands. The policy was published and took effect after the required notice period, making the benefit available to eligible government employees, with strict confidentiality for any mental health information disclosed in the application process and procedures similar to other leave types. Wellness Leave is non-cumulative and non-convertible to cash if unused within the year.

Recognizing the importance of this benefit for educators, the Department of Education (DepEd) moved to implement Wellness Leave for public school teachers and non-teaching personnel nationwide. Under DepEd Order No. 002, s. 2026, DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara announced that all its personnel, from central office to regional, division, and school levels, regardless of employment status – including permanent, temporary, casual, contractual, coterminous, substitute, provisional, and even Contract of Service or Job Order personnel – are now entitled to avail up to five days of Wellness Leave each year. The department stressed that the policy aligns with the CSC's guidelines and the

broader administration's directive to strengthen mental health support and employee welfare across the public sector.

DepEd highlighted that teachers face increasing work demands and that supporting their well-being and mental health is crucial not only for the educators themselves but also for the quality of education delivered to learners. Under the policy, eligible personnel may file for Wellness Leave at least five days in advance, except in emergencies, and unused days cannot be carried forward or converted to cash. DepEd also assured that any mental health-related information disclosed during the application process will be treated confidentially in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

The inclusion of teachers in the Wellness Leave benefit is seen as a significant development in public sector employment policy, especially since traditional leave systems for teachers under laws like the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers differ from those of other government workers. With Wellness Leave, educators now have structured time off specifically aimed at supporting their health and resilience, separate from other leave credits, reinforcing the government's commitment to a healthier and more supportive work environment in the education sector.

References:

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