

	CITY OF DECATUR PERSONNEL POLICY		
Chapter 04	Benefits		
Section 06	Mental Health Leave		
Revised By:	Nate Mara, City Manager	Revised Date:	November 10, 2025
Approved By:	Nate Mara, City Manager	Effective Date:	January 1, 2026

04.06 Mental Health Leave

This policy applies to all First Responders (Police Officers, Firefighters and Telecommunicators) employed by the City of Decatur, in accordance with H.B. No. 1486 and applies to all current and new hires.

A. Conditions. A First Responder shall be allowed up to three (3) days or twenty-four (24) hours of paid mental health leave per calendar year subject to the following conditions:

- a. The leave is:
 - i. Approved by the employee’s supervisor or Department Head, or
 - ii. Ordered by a mental health professional, and

- b. The leave is taken as a result of a traumatic event that occurred while on duty, as defined below.

B. Definitions

- a. Traumatic Event- an event which occurs in the First Responder(s) scope of employment when the patrol officer, fire fighter, and/or telecommunicator is involved in the response to, or investigation of, an event that causes the First Responder to experience unusually strong emotional reactions or feelings which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function during or after the incident.

Traumatic events may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Major disasters which may include response to weather related events involving multiple casualties, explosions with multiple casualties, or search and recovery missions involving multiple casualties;
 - ii. Incidents involving multiple casualties which may include shootings or traffic accidents;
 - iii. Line of duty death or suicide of a department member;
 - iv. Death of a child resulting from violence or neglect; or
 - v. Officer(s) involved shooting of a person.
 - vi. This definition does not include personal trauma, such as family issues.

- b. Mental health leave - administrative leave with pay granted in response to a traumatic event that occurred in the scope of the First Responder(s) employment.

- c. Mental Health Professional - a licensed social or mental health worker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

C. Privacy

- a. Any request for mental health leave shall be treated as strictly confidential by all parties involved and shall not be discussed or disclosed outside the first responders' immediate chain of command and the City's Human Resources department, and only as necessary to facilitate the use of the leave.
- b. Any Department Head or supervisor who becomes aware of behavioral changes and suggests the first responder seek mental health leave shall not discuss that matter with any third party. Any breach of this confidentiality shall be grounds for discipline.
- c. Confidentiality may be waived by the first responder seeking mental health leave.
- d. Confidentiality may be waived under circumstances which indicate the first responder is a danger to themselves or others, and department personnel must confer with mental health professionals.
- e. Mental Health Leave hours will be recorded on the timesheet with a separate code for hours taken to provide anonymity. These hours taken are not eligible for overtime pay.
- f. The City will keep requests to take mental health leave and any medical information related to mental health leave under this policy confidential to the extent allowed by law and separate from the employee's general personnel file.
- g. The City cannot guarantee anonymity of information that is otherwise public or necessary to carry out the agency's duties under the law.

D. Benefits During Leave

- a. Mental Health Leave provides that First Responders (Police Officers, Fire Fighters and Telecommunicators) will continue to be eligible for all employment benefits and compensation including continuing their leave accrual, pension benefits, and eligibility for health benefit plan benefits for the duration of the leave.
- b. While on paid Mental Health Leave, the First Responders will not be required to use any other paid leave type (vacation, sick, holiday, compensatory time).
- c. An employee on Mental Health Leave may not work a second job including self-employment or participate in volunteer work (unless the volunteer work is part of the employee's recovery program as administered by a Mental Health Professional and certified in advance to the Human Resources Department).
- d. If a First Responder is off work due to Mental Health Leave and the employee qualifies for family and medical leave, it will run concurrently with the Mental Health Leave.

E. Effect on Paid Leave Balances

- a. While on paid Mental Health Leave, the City will not reduce the eligible employee's PTO or other paid leave balance for mental health leave taken under this policy.
- b. The eligible employee will need to complete the appropriate Leave of Absence form to document the absence. The form will need to be approved by the supervisor or Department Head.