

# Advance Sick Leave

Sometimes our members find themselves in a bind in regards to needing time off of work for medical issues but don't have the sick leave to cover the absence. If you find yourself in this situation, Advance Sick Leave may help you. Read on.....

## **What is Advance Sick Leave?**

In accordance with Section 513.5 of the Employee Labor Manual (ELM), Advance Sick Leave is sick leave that "may be advanced in cases of serious disability or ailments if there is reason to believe the employee will return to duty. Sick leave may be advanced whether or not the employees have annual leave to their credit." Advance Sick Leave is only available to career employees.

For example, let's say you have little to no sick leave left and are scheduled to have surgery next month. Your doctor says you will need to be off work for three weeks and you can return to work after that period. Since many of us would be in a certain degree of financial hardship without any money for three weeks, the Advance Sick Leave would be of great help. When you return to work after your recovery, the sick leave that was advanced to you would have to be reimbursed as you continue working. This would be accomplished by the USPS deducting sick leave from your balance as you earn it.

Employees are allowed up to 240 hours of Advance Sick Leave per request. The main advantage to Advance Sick Leave is that it allows employees to continue receiving sick leave pay during an absence that normally would have to have been covered by Annual leave and/or Leave With Out Pay (LWOP). Also, you do not need to exhaust your Annual Leave or any donated leave prior to applying for Advance Sick Leave.

The paperwork for Advance Sick Leave should be submitted well enough in advance to allow the request to be processed so you have the sick leave available when your absence begins. The request should be submitted to your management representative (supervisor, MDO, OIC, Postmaster) who should ensure it is given prompt consideration.

I would strongly advise that you follow up with your management representative a few days after your submission for Advance Sick Leave to ensure your request is being properly considered. Most management representatives will act promptly but sometimes they will forget about it. You may also ask your APWU Steward to follow up on your behalf.

**When applying for Advance Sick Leave, you should include the following to management:**

- 1). Supporting documentation from your physician. Your doctor should provide a letter that has the dates of your absence because of a surgery/illness and a date that you are returning to work. It is important to have your physician state you are returning to work afterwards as management will need to make sure you can re-pay the sick leave if they approve your request.
- 2). PS Form 1221, Advance Sick Leave Authorization. This form contains basic info regarding you and your request for Advance Sick Leave.
- 3). A PS Form 3971 requesting leave for absence from work and a letter from you requesting the Advance Sick Leave, how many hours you desire, what dates you will be needed off work and when you are returning to work. If you have a low sick leave balance that is due to FMLA or other serious reasons, make sure to explain this. Remember to submit your request as far in advance as possible. Too many times, members submit a request for Advance Sick Leave just prior to the commencement of their desired leave date and they subsequently go without pay until the request is approved and the leave advanced to their balance.

Lastly, you will need your request to be approved. Prior to this occurring, management will look at your sick leave balance and if they feel you have abused sick leave or you will not be able to pay the sick leave back they will more than likely deny your request. Keep in mind however that a low sick leave balance is NOT an automatic reason for management to deny your request. Prior FMLA use and/or other serious issues that have caused your sick leave balance to drop are legitimate reasons for management to consider when reviewing your sick leave balance prior to disapproving your request. Therefore, the reasons for a low sick leave balance should be explained in the letter you write asking for the Advance Sick Leave.

If you feel your request for Advanced Sick Leave has been unjustly disapproved, you can call a union steward to investigate on your behalf. This should be done as soon as possible so as to give the union enough time to prepare a grievance if necessary. You only have 14 days to file a grievance from when you were notified of the disapproved request.

If you have any questions on this please contact an APWU Steward.

