

# Section 1501a - Supplemental Sick Leave Bank (SSLB)

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Supplemental Sick Leave Bank (SSLB) is to establish a pool of local sick leave days that are voluntarily contributed to the bank by HISD employees. These days are to be used by the contributing members for additional sick leave days in the event a member has exhausted all personal leave time available and experiences a catastrophic illness as defined by the plan.

## **Definition of Catastrophic Illness**

A catastrophic illness or injury is defined by the plan as an acute or prolonged illness or injury that is considered life-threatening and has the potential threat of serious residual disability if left untreated. The disability may be due to sickness, surgery (non-elective), injury, or complication of pregnancy. With a catastrophic illness, the severity requires the ongoing services of a licensed medical practitioner, and the condition must prevent the employee from performing the assigned regular material duties for seven (7) or more consecutive workdays. Exceptions may be granted by the SSLB Administrator in atypical/extreme cases of serious illness involving a minimum of seven (7) non-consecutive days of absence in a plan year. Examples of a catastrophic illness or injury include, but are not limited to, heart attack, stroke, or cancer.

*Medically related issues such as pregnancy, childbirth, extended hospital stays, and elective surgeries that occur without complication are not considered catastrophic illnesses and are not covered by the SSLB.*

## **Membership Eligibility**

All active HISD employees eligible to participate in the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS), or accrue local personal leave (LPL) and have available one half of an LPL day to contribute to the SSLB, are eligible to participate in the SSLB. The LPL hours must be available and will be deducted during the first pay period of the participant's contract year or shortly thereafter. The hours contributed will vary, as the total deduction will be determined by the participant's full-time equivalency (FTE) and planned working time. It is the participant's responsibility to verify that the LPL hours have been deducted to ensure membership in the SSLB program. Employees with no available local personal leave on the date the deduction is made will be ineligible to participate in the plan year (even if the LPL hours were available when the membership election was initially submitted in OneSource).

## **Section 1501b – Enrollment Periods / Contributing Days**

### **Enrollment Periods**

In an effort to ensure all employees have an opportunity to participate in the SSLB program, HISD will conduct three (3) annual enrollment periods; pre-enrollment, open enrollment, and benefits-concurrent open enrollment. Pre-enrollment is conducted in May, open enrollment is conducted in August, and a benefits-concurrent open enrollment period will coincide with the health and wellness benefits open enrollment period. Multiple enrollment periods allow employees greater participation opportunities, regardless of the employee's contract year.

Each year during pre-enrollment the SSLB Plan will notify employees of their membership status and offer the opportunity to enroll or terminate membership in the plan. Pre-enrollment will be processed for the first pay period of the participant's contract year or shortly thereafter. Participating members must contribute one half of an LPL day (hours will vary) at the beginning of their contract year to maintain membership in the SSLB. During open enrollment and benefits-concurrent open enrollment, the LPL hours will be deducted as soon as administratively possible. Participating SSLB members are automatically reenrolled in the plan in subsequent years unless the member elects to terminate.

The qualifying LPL hours must be available and will be deducted during the first pay period of the participant's contract year or shortly thereafter. It is the participant's responsibility to verify the contributed hours have been deducted to ensure membership in the SSLB program. Employees with no available local personal leave on the date the deduction is made will be ineligible to participate in the plan year (even if the LPL hours were available when the membership election was initially submitted in OneSource).

Employees desiring to join the SSLB must log in to their OneSource Employee Self-Service account at the following link: <https://onesource.houstonisd.org/iri/portal>, click on the SSLB Enrollment/Disenrollment link, and follow the prompts.

### **Contributing Days to the SSLB**

To become a participating member of the SSLB, an employee must contribute one half of a local personal leave (LPL) day (hours may vary) to the SSLB program for the year in which the employee is a member. The SSLB plan year is September 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup>. The LPL hours are automatically deducted from the member's local personal leave accumulation. All donated hours are the property of the SSLB and will not be returned to the employee for any reason. Active SSLB members may not elect to terminate membership during the benefits-concurrent open enrollment period.

At the discretion of the SSLB Administrator, additional hours or days (other than the LPL hours contributed for enrollment in the plan year) may be requested to enable the SSLB Administrator to continue to honor eligible benefits claims. However, membership will not be affected if a member chooses not to contribute the additional hours or day.

In the event the SSLB pool of local leave days is depleted within a plan year and is unable to secure additional leave days, requests for benefits will be denied. Personnel on Temporary Disability leave will not retain membership in the SSLB and must submit a new enrollment application during an enrollment period in order to participate.

# Section 1501c - Applying for Benefits / Approval of Request

## Applying For SSLB Benefits

The member or their chosen representative may initiate a request for benefits by submitting the SSLB claim forms. The properly completed claim forms must be received within 30 days of the member's first unpaid leave day/absence. It is the member's responsibility to ensure that each absence has been properly recorded. Failure to submit a timely request will constitute a waiver of benefits from the SSLB. Members must exhaust all earned and advanced vacation, state leave, local leave, and compensatory time prior to eligibility for payment from the SSLB.

SSLB claims applications must be submitted to the Houston ISD Leave Administration department via email at [LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org](mailto:LeaveAdministration@HoustonISD.org) or fax to 713-556-6966. The application for SSLB claim forms can be found on the HISD Leave Administration website under "[Supplemental Sick Leave Bank \(SSLB\)](#)". Benefit claim applications must include Claim Form I - Confidential Member's Statement and Claim Form II - Confidential Attending Physician's Statement. Claim Form I must be completed by the member and Claim Form II must be completed by the member's physician. All forms must be properly completed before submitting to the Leave Administration department. The original copy of Claim Form II - Confidential Attending Physician's Statement must be attached and include the following: ICD-10 code (include the nature of the illness and/or extent of injury), date of initial onset of medical condition (current status), and anticipated date of return to duty (full or part-time). The SSLB Administrator will not process incomplete requests.

Confidentiality is important and efforts are made to maintain confidentiality of all information submitted to the Leave Administration department. Obtained information is used only as necessary.

## SSLB Benefits Details

SSLB sick leave time awarded will be granted only after the member has exhausted all accumulated vacation, state leave, local leave, and compensatory time. Only work absences due to a member's illness are eligible for payment from the SSLB (family member illness is not eligible). Regularly scheduled workdays, based on an employee's District-approved work schedule, are eligible for payment from the SSLB. A maximum of thirty (30) days may be awarded from the SSLB during the plan year (September 1<sup>st</sup> - August 31<sup>st</sup>). SSLB days granted during one plan year will not carry over to subsequent plan years. Members may submit claims for separate illnesses in a plan year, up to the annual maximum of thirty (30) days. The SSLB Program will not pay more than thirty (30) days for any member in a plan year, regardless of multiple claims for separate illnesses. The value of each sick leave day awarded is equal to the member's regular HISD daily rate of pay.

SSLB participants may be awarded SSLB time to supplement income received under the Worker's Compensation Act, but the combined incomes may not exceed the member's regular HISD daily rate of pay. SSLB participants receiving income from HISD disability insurance may be awarded time from the SSLB at a rate which, when combined with the disability income, may not exceed the member's regular HISD daily rate of pay. Pay earned from time awarded from the SSLB program shall not cause a member to receive more than his or her annual HISD salary.

## Section 1501d - Other SSLB Information

### Appeal Procedures

SSLB program appeals are processed and reviewed by the HISD Leave Administration department on an individual basis. When an SSLB benefits claim is denied, the participant may submit an appeal application to Leave Administration. Additional claim information and documentation may be required from the participant before the claim appeal can be reviewed. Appeal application forms are available from Leave Administration and must be returned within forty-five (45) calendar days following the claim denial notification.

### Supplemental Sick Leave Bank Administrator

The Supplemental Sick Leave Bank Program is administered by the Houston ISD Leave Administration department. All references to "The Administrator" in this document apply to the Leave Administration department.

### Termination of Membership in the SSLB

SSLB membership will be terminated for the following reasons:

- a. Employee status changes to Temporary Disability Leave,
- b. Separation of employment,
- c. Suspension without pay (during suspension period),
- d. Misuse or abuse of program benefits, and
- e. Employee terminates membership.

Participants may only terminate membership during the SSLB program pre-enrollment and open-enrollment periods. To disenroll, log in to your OneSource Employee Self-Service account [here](#), click on the SSLB Enrollment/Disenrollment link, and follow the prompts. The member is not eligible for SSLB benefits after the effective date of cancellation. The effective date of cancellation will be the end of the current plan year (typically August 31<sup>st</sup>) or during the period indicated by reasons a – e above, whichever comes first. Change in employment status from full-time to part-time, which makes the member ineligible for coverage under the provision of this plan, renders a member ineligible for benefits.

Membership terminates upon separation of employment. Upon reemployment with the district, eligible employees may enroll in the SSLB program by following the enrollment procedures.

### SSLB Records Maintenance

SSLB enrollment records and benefit claims requests are securely maintained by the Leave Administration department and retained for the current plan year plus one year. Leave Administration will provide reports on the SSLB program upon request by senior district administration. Leave Administration will respond to written requests for SSLB plan information within a reasonable time.