Expert Advice on Military Leave

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Adedayo: Welcome to Leading Edge Online. My name is Adedayo Adeniyi, I am the Director of Leadership and Organization Developing in the Office of the Vice President for Human Resources. Joining me today is Sharon Williams. Sharon is the Senior Employee Relations Specialist. Welcome, Sharon.

Sharon: Thanks Adedayo.

Adedayo: Today's focus is military leave. Sharon, can you please share with us the principle purpose of this policy and why it was established?

Sharon: This policy was established in conjunction with the federal law that requires employers to allow employees to be gone for military leave, as well as granting them reinstatement rights once they return from military leave.

Adedayo: Sharon, in addition to those things that you've mentioned, what are the other reasons that a person might need to take this type of leave?

Sharon: When someone is in the military but they're not in active duty status or they might be part of the National Guard or part of the Reserves, it's traditional for them to need to take time off during the year for training and we provide leave for that as well.

Adedayo: What type of notice is required in association with this type of leave?
Sharon: Hopefully the employee knows somewhat ahead of time that they have a need to take military leave and there's paperwork to fill out, however, if the employee simply verbally requests military leave, then they need to be granted that leave and we can get the paperwork later.

Adedayo: Sharon, is this leave paid, unpaid or a combination of the two?

Sharon: This leave can be in a paid status if the employee needs to be gone for 15 calendar days or less from work. So, for example, if they need to go to two weeks of active duty training, they can do that in a paid status and they would fill out the appropriate paperwork. If the leave exceeds the 15 work days in a calendar year, then the employee would take it in an unpaid status.

Adedayo: When you mentioned unpaid status, after they've used their 15 days of leave, can they use their vacation time, could they use their own time?

Sharon: Yes, they can use their vacation time, they can take it unpaid but they do have the 15 work days in a calendar year that are paid.

Adedayo: And it sounds as though the paperwork that they fill out will actually document how they plan on using either paid, unpaid leave or...

Sharon: That's correct, the forms will ask for that information.
Adedayo: Sharon, you've shared with us a little bit about what it takes for a staff member to request leave, the faculty or staff member requests leave, can you please share with us a little bit about how do they get reinstated after military leave.

Sharon: Once an individual returns from a lengthy military leave, if it's just the 15 calendar days, their paperwork is going to cover that but should someone be gone for, say, they're deployed for a year to a foreign country, then they have certain timeframes in which to notify the employer that they would like to be reinstated to their position. And in most cases, the employee gets reinstated to the position that they left.

Adedayo: Sharon, what tips would you provide the supervisor in order to maintain compliance with this policy?

Sharon: I think similar to the FMLA, the military leave is a complicated policy in federal law so once your employee comes to you and requests a type of military leave, it's important for the supervisor to contact human resources with assistance with completing the paperwork in a timely manner.

Adedayo: Sharon, what are the common errors a supervisor or employee might make in connection to this policy?

Sharon: I think it's important for supervisors to remember that the determination is to whether or not someone's eligible for military leave, does not rest with them but with human resources as the paperwork is processed. Also, when someone is reinstated from a lengthy military leave, there are a variety of benefits that they're eligible for such as continued pay increases while they were gone and
things like that. So it's really important that you work with your HR professional to make sure this policy and law is implemented appropriately.

**Adedayo:** Sharon, as we wrap things up here today, are there any parting thoughts that you would like to leave with the supervisors?

**Sharon:** I think it's important that as a university and as an employer Purdue supports individuals who happen to be employed by us that are in the military, we have a federal law that we have to follow and we have this policy that relates directly to the federal law, it's important for supervisors to be aware that employees have the right to take this leave and to work with human resources to help implement this leave so we have a win-win for everyone.

**Adedayo:** Sharon, as always, thank you very much for joining us today and we look forward to your return.

**Sharon:** Thank you.