Expert Advice on Unpaid Personal Leave (AP Staff and Faculty)

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Adedayo: Welcome to Leading Edge Online. My name is Adedayo Adeniyi. I am the director for Leadership in Organization Development in the office of Vice President for Human Resources. Joining me today is Sharon Williams. Sharon is a senior Employee Relations Specialist. Welcome, Sharon.

Sharon: Thanks, Adedayo.

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

Sharon: Well, Purdue has very generous paid leave policies for the administrative professional staff and the faculty. However, there may be times when that paid leave has been exhausted and so Purdue policy provides for absence from campus and paid status as well.

Adedayo: Sharon, what type of leave would qualify underneath the unpaid personal leave policy?

Sharon: A good example might be an administrative professional staff member who may be has only been here 3 months and so they don't have a lot of vacation time. They've just moved here and they need to go back to where they came from to conduct some business and other than personal business days, they need some additional time. So they could request unpaid leave for that.
Adedayo: Sharon, what tips would you like to provide the supervisors to maintain compliance with this policy?

Sharon: I think it's important that supervisors know or have a good idea of how much paid leave time employees have because from a practical perspective, they shouldn't be granting unpaid time when the employee actually has vacation or paid sick leave available to use. But they should listen to what the employee's requesting, and if it involves other laws or policies, they need to contact human resources for some advice.

Adedayo: Sharon, what other types of laws and policies might be involved when we're considering this particular leave?

Sharon: Well, for example, if someone's about to exhaust their paid sick leave and/or their FMLA leave and they need additional leave, it may be that the person requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act. And so that would be a situation where unpaid leave would not be at the discretion of the supervisor.

Adedayo: Sharon, what are the common errors that supervising employees make in connection to this policy?

Sharon: I think that supervisors need to make sure that they have all the facts before they make a decision about granting unpaid time. And, in fact, as we mentioned before, there could be complications with the ADA Amendments Act that might cause it to be granted whether the supervisor wants it to be or not. So they need to make sure they have all the facts and as always, they can contact human resources for advice.
Adedayo: When you had mentioned having all the facts, how much facts do we want them to actually go into?

Sharon: Well, certainly we don't want them to have medical information if medical is involved but they need to know how much time the employee needs off and to be sure that there's no paid leave time that could cover this time instead of unpaid time because we always want to strive for the employee to use paid time.

Adedayo: Sharon, as we wrap this up today, are there any parting thoughts you'd like to share with the supervisors?

Sharon: Unpaid leave is something that's available to employees. It isn't necessarily something that supervisors have to deal with because Purdue has pretty generous leave policies that are paid. However, there are times when a staff member or faculty member may need some unpaid time. And it's important for supervisors to know the policy and know what the facts are and consult human resources if necessary for a win-win for everybody.

Adedayo: Sharon, as always, thank you so much for joining us.

Sharon: Thanks, Adedayo.