Expert Advice on Unpaid Personal Leave (Clerical and Service Staff)

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**Adedayo**: Welcome to Leading Edge Online. My name is Adedayo Adeniyi. I am the director for leadership and organizational development in the office of the vice president for human resources. Joining me today is Sharon Williams. Sharon is a senior employer relations specialist. Welcome, Sharon.

**Sharon**: Thanks, Adedayo.

**Adedayo**: Today's focus is the clerical service staff unpaid personal leave. Sharon, can you please share with us the principle purpose of this leave and why it was established?

**Sharon**: The unpaid personal leave for clerical service staff was established for the times when someone from the clerical and service staff might have exhausted all of their sick leave or all of their vacation pay, paid leave, and they still need some time off and the supervisor wants to grant it.

**Adedayo**: Sharon, what are some examples of leave that would qualify for this purpose?

**Sharon**: For example, if a clerical and service staff person didn't have a lot of accrued paid sick leave and they were on FMLA that unpaid leave would run concurrent with the FMLA unpaid leave. There are also times, for example in housing and food services during the summer, when they might not need as many people working and so they could put people on unpaid leave during that time.
Most of the time unpaid leave is requested by the employee. However, in the case I gave an example of with housing and food services that could be requested by the supervisor. In that case the employee wouldn't have to accept that. There could be other work assigned, but it's a mutually acceptable leave that we don't have your job for you to do and you'd like to have the summer off. And so then it's kind of mutually acceptable between the employee and the supervisor.

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

**Sharon**: I would encourage them to have discussions with their employees who are in need of unpaid leave. There is paperwork to complete in addition to recording it properly on the employee's time card. And so supervisors should also work with human resources in any time that unpaid leave is necessary.

**Adedayo**: Sharon, what are the common errors that a supervisor or an employee may make when implementing this particular policy?

**Sharon**: I think one of the errors that's commonly made is supervisors grant unpaid time to employees during the first 90 days of employment. In fact, the policy doesn't allow for unpaid time for employees until after they have successfully completed their first 90 days of employment. The other thing is that sometimes supervisors make a decision that they're going to deny an unpaid leave when, in fact, there may be other laws and policies that they need to take into consideration. And so I would always encourage supervisors any time there's a request or a need for an unpaid leave that they contact human resources.
Adedayo: Sharon, as we wrap things up, are there any parting thoughts that you'd like to leave with the supervisor?

Sharon: Purdue has generous leave policies that are paid, but in the case where employees don't have paid time available Purdue does provide unpaid time, and so supervisors need to be sure to work with their human resources area to make sure they follow all the procedures so that we can have a win-win result for both the employee and the supervisor.

Adedayo: Sharon, thank you very much for joining us today. We really appreciate it.

Sharon: You're welcome.