

**Policy:**

It is the policy of Lee County to grant employees who want to continue their education in preparation for added responsibilities with Lee County a limited educational leave of absence without pay.

**408:1 GENERAL PROVISIONS**

1. Educational leaves may be granted for a minimum of two (2) weeks and a maximum of twelve (12) months.
2. Employees will be required to pay fifty percent (50%) of the cost of health insurance premiums and one hundred (100%) of the dental & life insurance premiums during unpaid educational leaves of absence.
3. An employee who fails to return to work at the conclusion of an approved educational leave will be considered to have voluntarily abandoned the position. In such instances, the County may recover, at its discretion, from the employee the County's share of any insurance premiums paid by Lee County on behalf of the employee and his/her dependents, as well as any educational assistance received in the preceding twelve (12) months.
4. Benefits that accrue according to length of service such as paid vacation, sick leave, and retirement credit do not accrue during periods of unpaid educational leave of absence.
5. Employees will be required to use all available vacation leave prior to utilizing an unpaid educational leave of absence.
6. At the sole discretion of the Department Director, an employee may be allowed to take educational leave on a modified or reduced work schedule if it does not affect the operation of, or create hardship to, the department.
7. The Department shall attempt to return the employee to the original position or similar position upon return from educational leave; however, such job protection is not guaranteed as all positions are subject to operational needs and requirements.
8. An employee returning to work from an educational leave of absence must comply with any reinstatement requirements specified by any federal and state law. If the same job or one of equivalent status is not available as a result of a reduction in force occurring during the employee's leave, the employee will be treated in the same manner as though he/she were not on leave at the time of the reduction in force.

# EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

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