



# Your New Pregnancy Leave Rights as a **UC POSTDOC**

**P**regnancy and childbirth are occasions more apt for celebrating than stressing because you have to work or are worried about losing your health benefits or your job. Unfortunately, before our contract was ratified this kind of stress was all too prevalent for pregnant postdocs. This stress negatively affected both postdocs and the academy.

According to a study by Mary Ann Mason at UC Berkeley<sup>1</sup>, more women are obtaining Ph.D.s in science than ever before, but those women – largely because of pressures from having a family – are far more likely than their male counterparts to “leak” out of the research science pipeline before obtaining tenure at a college or university.

Under-representation of women in senior roles has been a longstanding problem within academia, and that’s why winning these significant improvements in our first contract was such an important victory.

## Your Pregnancy Disability Leave Rights

- Postdocs get a minimum of six weeks and, if medically necessary, up to six months of pregnancy disability leave. Leave can be paid or unpaid. UC must provide benefits (for example, health insurance for you and your baby) even if the leave is unpaid. Postdocs whose fellowship or extramural funding agency provides for longer than six weeks of guaranteed pregnancy leave are entitled to the longer leave.

- Salary and benefits for paid leave can be paid by using one or more of the following: short-term disability leave, sick leave, personal time off, fellowship-provided paid leave, paid leave voluntarily provided by your PI or department, or parental or maternity leave from your fellowship or extramural funding agency (note: paid leaves from these sources is often significantly better than that provided by UC—for example, individual and institutional NIH NRSA fellowships provide 60 calendar days [equivalent to 8 work weeks] of parental leave per year for the adoption or the birth of a child, and either parent is eligible for parental leave.)
- **Short-Term Disability (STD) Leave (Article 11):** The STD benefit for pregnancy disability leave guarantees a minimum of six weeks (five weeks paid at 70% salary after a one week waiting period which can be paid by using sick leave or personal time off). STD leave paid at 70% salary beyond the six weeks (up to a total of 180 days) requires medical documentation.
- **Sick Leave (Article 22):** You can use sick days to earn 100% salary for any part of your leave. Sick days are “work days” (Monday-Friday, excluding UC holidays), so you only need to use up to 5 sick days to earn your full salary while waiting a week for your STD benefit to begin.
- **Paid Time Off (Article 17):** You can use Paid Time Off (PTO) to earn 100% salary for any part



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of your leave. PTO days are “work days” (Monday-Friday, excluding UC holidays), so you only need to use up to 5 PTO days to earn your full salary while waiting a week for your STD benefit to begin.

- **Reduced Work Schedule/Temporary Reassignment/Modification of Duties (Article 11):** You can request a reduced work schedule, temporary reassignment, or modification of duties to be less strenuous and hazardous.
- **Non-Discrimination (Article 15):** UC may not discriminate against you for being pregnant. These protections were won through hard-fought struggle. If you feel that you are being discriminated against in any way, contact the union.
- **Additional Fellowship-Provided Leaves:** Many fellowships and Paid-Direct-funds include longer or additional periods of paid pregnancy leave.
- **Paid Leave Voluntarily Provided by Your PI:** Nothing in the contract prohibits your PI from providing more paid leave than what is required by the contract.

## Logistics of Taking Pregnancy Disability Leave

These are general recommendations. Contact the union for advice on or questions about how to best tailor the rights secured in the contract to your situation.

- **Before Your Leave Begins:**
  - Plan the mix of paid time off, sick leave, short-term disability, unpaid leave, modified duties, etc. that works best for you.
  - When appropriate, notify your PI (and funding agency if applicable) that you will be taking a

leave and discuss when you are likely to stop and return to work. If applicable, discuss modified duties/reassignment.

- Complete the STD Claim Form (available at <http://www.garnett-powers.com/postdoc/index.htm>) with information from you, your doctor and your department. Submit completed form to Garnett-Powers & Associates at (FAX: (949) 583-2929; Phone: 1-800-254-1758).
- Make arrangements with payroll regarding the mix of sick days, personal time off, short-term disability, unpaid leave, etc. that you will be using. Confirm that UC will cover your insurance premiums while on leave.
- **During Your Leave:**
  - Notify your department and PI when you start your leave.
  - Inform your department and PI of changes in your leave.
  - Visit the Garnett Powers & Associates website to add your newborn to your coverage within 30 days of birth and give enrollment form to payroll.
- **Returning to Work:**
  - If necessary, have your physician certify your return to work.
  - Notify your department and PI that you are back.
  - If on a modified work schedule, complete the appropriate paperwork.

<sup>1</sup>Mary Ann Mason, Marc Goulden, and Karie Frasch, “Keeping Women in the Science Pipeline,” UC Berkeley (2010)



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