

REGIONAL Standard Operating Procedure	
Title: Granting of Vacation Leave	Policy Number: 11-06-V1
Region: Stanton Territorial Hospital	
Applicable Domain: Human Resources	
Additional Domain(s): N/A	
Effective Date: <i>Day/Month/Year</i>	Next Review Date: <i>Day/Month/Year</i>
Issuing Authority: Chief Operating Officer	Date Approved: <i>Day/Month/Year</i>
Accreditation Canada Applicable Standard: N/A	

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLE:**

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority (NTHSSA)-Stanton Territorial hospital (STH) is committed to establishing standardized processes for employees to apply for annual bulk vacation leave that are fair and equitable.

### **PURPOSE/RATIONALE:**

This Procedure is required for use when managing staffing levels, skill mix, patient acuity and level of supervision to grant employee leave while ensuring that STH maintains the provision of quality services in a safe and effective manner to avoid negative patient outcomes.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Bulk Leave:** vacation leave of four days or more, requested by January 31, that an employee can use in the following fiscal year as per article 18.02(1)(d) of the UNW Collective Agreement.

**24/7 Operating Units:** units that provide services seven days per week.

**Non 24/7 Operating Units:** units that do not provide services seven days per week and follow a Monday to Friday operating schedule.

### **SCOPE/APPLICABILITY:**

**Disclaimer Message:** This is a **CONTROLLED** document for internal use only. Any documents appearing in paper form are not controlled and should be checked against the electronic file version prior to use.

This SOP applies to all NTHSSA-STH employees, and other persons acting on behalf of the NTHSSA (including contracted service providers as necessary) who apply for annual leave during the bulk leave period between January 1 and January 31 of each year.

## **PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Bulk Leave**

In accordance with the Collective Agreement, STH has established an advanced scheduling period for considering vacation leave requests. This advanced scheduling period is from January 1 to January 31 each calendar year. All vacation leave requests must be preapproved by the Employer and must be submitted to the employee's Supervisor/Manager.

All requests must be submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor using the unit-based specific process as outlined by the Manager. This could be entry in the ScheduleSoft (SS) system, submissions via the paper-based leave request form or via email. The unit-based method will be clearly communicated to staff before the advanced scheduling period.

Vacation leave requests made during the advance scheduling period will be granted in accordance with the Collective Agreement. During this time, only vacation leave will be considered and is eligible for approval. Other forms of leave, such as lieu time taken, call back taken or mandatory leave, will NOT be considered during this time.

It is the responsibility of each employee to inform their immediate supervisor or designate that they wish to apply for a denied leave from the previous year and are requesting priority consideration for this time in the new year (as per Article 18.04 of the UNW Collective Agreement). This request must be submitted in writing or via email and include verification of the previously denied leave. The employee must request the same time off that was requested and denied the previous year.

#### Leave Requests of less than 4 days:

Leave requests of less than 4 days (based on the employee's regular shift) will not be considered in the Bulk Leave process. These requests may be made after February 14<sup>th</sup> for the following fiscal year (April 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>) and will be subject to the same staffing limits as set out in this SOP.

#### Leave Requests other than Vacation Leave:

This Procedure is specific to Vacation Leave where all other leave type requests (e.g. mandatory leave, lieu time, etc.) will be considered based on the parameters set out in the Collective Agreement for the applicable Leave Type along with operational requirements.

### Bulk Leave Approvals

Manageable staffing levels or staffing mix will determine how many staff may be on leave at any given time and will be determined considering operational requirements.

Managers can approve the following number of employees for leave per area/unit through the Bulk Leave process:

- For areas with *8 or less staff*, one staff can be granted leave at any time.
- For areas with *9 to 16 staff*, two staff can be granted leave at any time.
- For areas with *17 or more staff*, three staff can be granted leave at any time.
- In areas/units with diverse levels of care providers (e.g., nursing, personal support workers, behavioural health workers and administration) the differing level of care providers shall be considered as separate groups within the area/unit when granting leave. Nursing roles (RN and LPN) will be considered within the same grouping.

If the leave request is denied due to operational requirements, the shift(s) are marked as "denied" in SS or the unit-based specific scheduling system. If requested by the employee, this request may be re-evaluated one month before the denied leave date. At that time, if it can be determined that operational requirements can be met, the previously denied leave may be granted if still sought by the employee. In this situation, the "denied" request becomes granted and can no longer be carried over as per section 18.02(1)(e)(iii) of the UNW Collective Agreement and the employee's immediate supervisor must change the leave to "granted" in ScheduleSoft or the unit-based scheduling system and advise employee in writing.

### 24/7 Operating Units

Unless otherwise indicated by the employee, the leave period is considered from the last shift worked prior to the leave, until the first shift worked after the leave. The leave type is entered on the shifts that the employee was scheduled to work. Regular days off that occur during the leave period are entered into Schedule Soft (SS) as regular day's off-vacation (RDOVAC).

### Non 24/7 Operating Units (e.g., Outpatient Areas and Scheduled Services)

Units that offer non 24/7 operating services may implement department-level guidelines in accordance with this SOP that include allowance for additional staff member(s) to be granted Bulk Leave during periods of low client demand (e.g. Christmas and March Breaks for services provided at schools). This is to be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Director in December of each year for the following bulk leave period.

Units that offer both inpatient and outpatient services must ensure sufficient staffing is available to provide the unit's health care services.

Units that offer primarily scheduled services may allow one additional person to be on leave for up to a maximum of five days. No more than 50 percent of an area/unit may be approved for leave at one time.

Units where staff perform travel clinics will not consider employees who are scheduled to travel as unavailable for meeting operational requirements.

## **2. Supervisors/Clinical Coordinators/Managers**

The goal is to have adequate management coverage to support operations. Where a manager has more than one supervisor or clinical coordinator (CC), the supervisors/CCs leave requests will be reviewed as their own area rather than being included in the frontline staff leave allocation.

Managers' leave requests will be reviewed based on alignment with the leave thresholds above. During periods of high demand (December and March Breaks), one additional manager may be approved for leave. Manager's leave will typically be covered by a CC or another manager. If a Manager, Supervisor or CC were denied vacation in the previous year, they will be the first considered for the same time in the new year based on operational demands. As an example, if they were denied March break last year, they will be the first considered for that time in the new year.

Senior Manager leave requests will be reviewed as their own area, where leave will typically be covered by another Senior Manager or a Manager that reports to them with knowledge of the program areas. If a Senior Manager was denied vacation in the previous year, they will be the first considered for the same time in the new year based on operational demands. As an example, if they were denied March break last year, they will be the first considered for that time in the new year.

## **3. Applicable to All Areas**

### Part-Time and Job Share Employees:

Part-time employees (less than 1.0 FTE, or employees who job share), will be considered as separate individuals and as such are counted in the overall employee total for the unit.

### For annual leave requests prior to the advanced scheduling period

Leave requests submitted prior to the advanced scheduling period will not be accepted in accordance with the Collective Agreement.

All other vacation leave requests received after the advanced scheduling period (January 31) will be considered on a first come, first served basis; however, will be subject to the provisions of the Collective Agreement.

Employees are encouraged to submit leave requests outside of the bulk leave request timeframe as soon as possible to provide their supervisor(s) the ability to make the appropriate staffing arrangements necessary to clearly grant or deny the leave request.

The Employer shall approve or deny the request for vacation leave submitted by the employee as soon as possible, but no later than two weeks after the request has been received (see Article 18.02(2) in the Collective Agreement).

Where the Employer has proposed to change, reduce or deny the vacation leave requested by the employee, the employer shall provide the employee with reasons, in writing, for such change, reduction or denial of vacation leave, within the two (2) week period noted above (see Article 18.02 (3) of the Collective Agreement).

#### **4. Exceptional circumstance/Exceptions process**

At times, exceptional circumstances may arise. Employees may submit an exception request to their supervisor for consideration including an explanation of the exceptional circumstances. The request will be provided to the Director for review and recommendation to the COO for approval. Approvals of exceptional circumstances may be done based on operational requirements.

#### **PERFORMANCE MEASURES:**

N/A

#### **CROSS-REFERENCES:**

N/A

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A

#### **REFERENCES:**

Union of Northern Workers. (2023) Collective agreement between Union of Northern Workers and the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Act.  
[https://unw.ca/sites/default/files/2022-05/final\\_2021-23\\_unw\\_agreement\\_exp\\_march\\_31\\_2023.pdf](https://unw.ca/sites/default/files/2022-05/final_2021-23_unw_agreement_exp_march_31_2023.pdf)

#### **APPROVAL:**

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Date

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Stanton Territorial Hospital, COO