

**FAQs –**  
**Childbirth and Family Leave Policy**

*This policy refers to PhD and research-based graduate students who are receiving a stipend from Tulane University. Professional students should direct questions regarding childbirth and family leave options to your school's dean and the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility.*

*Disclaimer: We have attempted to address all issues within the Childbirth and Family Leave Policy and the FAQs. However, we are aware that we cannot cover every situation in these documents. Please stay in contact with the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility throughout the course of your pregnancy and leave so that we can attempt to accommodate any special circumstances that may arise.*

**Q: I recently found out that I am pregnant and my due date is during the academic semester. Do I have to drop out or take some kind of leave of absence?**

A: No, you do not have to drop out. You may choose to stay enrolled as a full-time student during the semester that you give birth. You are entitled to eight weeks of leave during that semester. If you are enrolled in coursework, arrangements will need to be made individually. (See FAQ #5 below.)

**Q: Do I need to become a part-time student?**

A: Probably not. One of the main purposes of the Childbirth and Family Leave Policy is to make it possible for a parent to maintain their full-time student status.

**Q: I am also working as an RA (or TA) as part of my PhD program. What happens with that funding during my leave?**

A: During your leave, you will continue to receive the same pay that you were receiving prior to your leave, regardless of the specific source of that funding. If there are questions about this, your department – probably the director of graduate studies and/or department chair -- will work with the [Office of Academic Affairs](#) on the mechanisms of the financial details.

**Q. Will my leave impact my progress toward the completion of my degree?**

A: It is possible that your leave might impact your progress through the degree and/or the completion of your courses, and this depends on the specifics of your situation. Academic milestones such as progress to candidacy can be extended by one academic semester. These details need to be discussed with your advisor/PI and the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility (see below).

**Q. What happens if I'm due to give birth in the summer?**

A: Typically, this policy only guarantees funding during the period of your stipend from Tulane (roughly nine months running from mid-August to mid-May for most graduate students receiving stipends). Summer employment is not guaranteed for most students. However, the eight-week period

will begin whenever you give birth, so it is possible that some part of the end of the spring or beginning of the fall would be covered by the Childbirth and Family Leave. For example, if you had a baby on August 1 and your stipend were scheduled to begin August 15, you would be eligible to receive six weeks of leave, as well as six weeks of your stipend.

**Q. What happens if my funding comes from a non-Tulane source?**

For students who are funded from sources outside the university (e.g. Ford, NSF, etc.), that agency's policies apply to you. If there is no policy, then this Tulane policy applies to you.

**Q: Who at the university should I talk to first about my pregnancy?**

A: Your first stop should be with the [Goldman Center for Student Accessibility](#), where you can review the details of leave policies, learn about your options, and ask questions. You can also discuss any short-term accommodations you may need during your pregnancy. The Goldman Center will then contact your department to provide information and guidance about the period of your leave.

**Q: When I meet with someone in the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility, is my confidentiality maintained?**

A: Yes, but only up to a point. Your confidentiality is maintained until the Goldman Center representative establishes communication with your department to discuss arrangements for your leave. At that time, in order to formulate a plan for your leave, they will need to disclose your identity to your department. However, even then, information will only be shared on a "need to know" basis.

**Q: What information will I need to share with the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility?**

A: You will need to share information about your due date, as well as whether there are any medical issues and/or accommodations that might need to be addressed. In addition, you should provide information to them about your funding – e.g. your stipend's source and amount. Once the Goldman Center representative contacts your department/program, they will confirm and, if necessary, clarify any details about your funding.

**Q: I know that I need to tell my PI/advisor that I'm pregnant. When should I do this?**

A: If at all possible, you will need to inform your PI or advisor about your pregnancy at least four months before your due date. Many details surrounding taking a Childbirth and Family Leave can take some time to arrange and will involve multiple offices on campus. We want to settle the details of your leave early enough so that everyone has adequate time to make decisions and preparations. You should also know that your health and medical issues are private matters and that this privacy is protected by federal law (HIPPA and FERPA). You are welcome to tell your PI or advisor whatever you would like to, but other than the information about the timing and details of your pregnancy and childbirth-related leave, you are not required to disclose any details about your pregnancy.

**Q: I'm worried about having this conversation -- how do I talk with my PI or advisor about my pregnancy?**

A: One of the best things to do is to be clear with yourself and with your PI or advisor about what your respective needs are, and to directly address those needs. Specifics about dates, responsibilities, and

expectations on both of your parts will be very helpful. You can seek out confidential guidance and support from staff in Student Affairs, Student Accessibility, the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and/or Counseling and Psychological Services. Lastly, you may want to talk to other graduate student parents, both at Tulane and/or at other institutions.

**Q: Does this mean I can keep my student health insurance while on leave?**

A: Yes. Whatever your current arrangements are with your program for covering your health insurance will continue for the eight weeks.

**Q: What if I have complications during my pregnancy, or I go into pre-term labor?**

A: The Childbirth and Family Leave Policy covers last-stage pregnancy, childbirth, and the care of a newborn. Therefore, your leave period might need to start earlier than expected. Also, you should talk to the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility and your healthcare provider about possible eligibility for short-term accommodations.

**Q: What happens if I am not ready to come back to school after eight weeks?**

A: You should let your PI or advisor know this as early as possible so that other arrangements can be made and so that you can discuss possible impacts on your academic progress. If you are also employed as part of your graduate program, your leave after eight weeks would be unpaid.

**Q: I'm pretty sure that I will need to take off more than eight weeks. Can I do that?**

A: Yes, you can, but the terms of your leave will be very different. You will want to look into the details of the Planned Educational Leave Program (PELP), where you opt to take one or two semesters off and then return to your graduate program. This option is intended for when you plan ahead of time to take a long leave, and it must be put in writing and approved by people in your department and in the university.

**Q: If I use the Planned Educational Leave, am I no longer a graduate student at Tulane?**

A: You do retain your student status during a Planned Educational Leave. However, there are many restrictions while on this kind of leave -- for example, financial aid and grants are suspended, you are not eligible to receive fellowship funds, and you would have to pay out-of-pocket if you wanted to keep your student health insurance.

**Q: How are the details of this policy affected if I'm an international student?**

A: It is the same, but you will also need to talk with the Office of International Students and Scholars to discuss the specifics of your situation. It is very likely that only the Childbirth Leave (rather than the semester- or year-long Planned Educational Leave) is a good option for you if your student visa requires that you maintain full-time enrolled status.

**Q: All of this applies to the person giving birth. What kind of leave applies when it is my partner who is giving birth?**

A. Regardless of your gender, as an expectant parent, all of the terms of this policy apply. You should observe the same timeline for contacting the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility so that we can work out the details of what a leave will entail in your particular situation.

**Q: What if both my partner and I are graduate students? Are we both eligible?**

A. Yes, you are both eligible to take the Childbirth and Family Leave. In addition, the Planned Educational Leave is available if either or both of you want to consider a semester or year off to care for your child.

**Q: Do these leave policies apply to me if I am fostering and/or adopting a child?**

A: Yes, they do.

**Q. If I or my partner is having a baby (or fostering or adopting), am I required to take the Childbirth and Family Leave?**

A. No, you do not have to take leave. However, Tulane University seeks to be supportive of graduate student parents and, as such, we encourage you to utilize these policies.