

City of Vergas
Over 2 weeks of Continuous Leave Coverage & Operations Policy (Draft)

Introduction

To establish a consistent City approach for covering essential work, maintaining benefits, and controlling costs when an employee is on approved leave for over 2 weeks of continuous leave.

Scope

This policy applies when an employee is on any City-approved leave of absence for up to 12 weeks (e.g., FMLA, parental, medical, military qualifying exigency). It governs operations and pay/benefit handling during absence. Eligibility for the leave itself is governed by the City's Leave Policy and applicable law.

Policy

1. Coverage Plan During Leave

A. Temporary Replacement

- The City may fill the position with a temporary employee (contract, seasonal, or limited-term) for the duration of the leave.
- The City may hire an outside firm to temporarily handle duties.
- The City may ask neighboring cities to temporarily help with duties.
- The Supervisor or Employee prepares a short coverage plan identifying:
 - A handover checklist that identifies work tasks will be completed before leave begins when foreseeable.
 - Whether duties are assigned to a temporary employee, redistributed to staff, or a mix
 - Training or handoff needs and any access required
- The Clerk-Treasurer/HR designee coordinates the temporary hire (if used), including budget coding, onboarding, and end date aligned to the expected return.

B. Cross-Training & Redistribution

- Where practical, duties may be redistributed to existing staff with personnel committee approval.
- Overtime requires pre-approval from the Personnel Committee and must be tracked to the appropriate budget line.

C. Continuity of Operations

- The Clerk-Treasurer ensures coverage for:
 - Public-facing services (phones, counters, email inboxes)
 - Required approvals/signatures (e.g., invoices, permits)
 - Time-sensitive regulatory tasks and reporting

2) Pay, Benefits, and Stipends During Leave

A. Base Wages

- Paid vs. unpaid leave is governed by the City's Personnel Policy and applicable law. Accrued paid leave used by the employee runs concurrently with any unpaid leave entitlement.

B. Benefits Continuation (Health/Life/Disability)

- The City will continue group benefits on the same employer contribution terms as active employment for up to 18 weeks of approved leave, provided the employee timely pays their share of premiums, as applicable.
- The Clerk-Treasurer/HR designee will notify the employee of premium amounts and payment due dates. Failure to timely pay may result in lapse of coverage as permitted by policy and law.

C. Retirement & Other Voluntary Deductions

- Retirement contributions to Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) will be followed by Minnesota Statue. Other voluntary deductions continue only if the employee has sufficient pay in a payroll cycle. If not, the City will provide instructions for direct-pay or will suspend deductions until return, as applicable to the plan.

D. Phone/Technology Reimbursements

- Cell phone/technology reimbursements are paused during leave effective the first full pay period of the leave and do not resume until the employee returns to active work and the stipend is reauthorized.

E. City-Issued Devices & Service Lines

- If the City provides a City-owned phone or device, the City will decide whether to:
 - Retrieve and reassign the device to a temporary employee, or
 - Retain it unopened/offline during the leave.
- Any City-paid carrier lines/services not required for operations may be suspended during the leave to control costs.

3) Access, Records, and Security

A. IT & Systems Access

- Prior to leave (when foreseeable), Clerk-Treasurer/IT designee access will be adjusted to protect City data while maintaining operational continuity (e.g., shared inbox access, out-of-office replies, forwarding of critical emails).
- No system changes may be made by the employee on leave without Clerk-Treasurer authorization.

B. City Property

- Keys, iPad, laptop, and other assets may be collected before leaving if needed for coverage or left with the employee if not required by the City. A receipt will be maintained.

C. Confidentiality

- Temporary staff and reassigned employees must follow all City privacy, records, and data security policies, and the City's records retention policy.

4) Communications & Public Interface

- The Clerk-Treasurer will set an automatic email and voicemail message indicating the employee is unavailable and provide alternate contacts.
- The City will communicate changes in office hours or services as needed via website, signage, or social channels.

5) Budgeting & Cost Controls

- Temporary replacement wages, overtime, and training costs will be charged to the department's budget line(s) identified by the Clerk-Treasurer.
- Phone stipends and any other allowances tied to active work when paused during the leave. (as noted in 2D).
- Any special pay adjustments or stipends for added responsibilities require prior written approval by the City Council.

6) Return-to-Work & Restoration

- Upon timely return from approved leave, the employee will be restored to the same or equivalent position in accordance with the City's Leave Policy and applicable law.
- If the leave was for the employee's own medical condition, a fitness-for-duty release may be required.

7) Roles & Responsibilities

- **Employee:** Provide notice, complete required forms/certifications, coordinate handoff, pay employee-share of benefits.
- **Supervisor/Employee:** Draft coverage plan, manage temporary staffing/redistribution, ensure service continuity, manage overtime.

- **Clerk-Treasurer/HR Designee:** Administer benefits and payroll changes, track costs, ensure policy compliance and notices, coordinate temporary hire onboarding/offboarding.
- **Clerk-Treasurer/IT Designee:** Adjust access, protect data, set up temporary or shared credentials per policy.

8) Compliance & Exceptions

This policy is intended to align with applicable federal and state law. The Clerk-Treasurer/Administrator may approve limited exceptions in writing for operational necessity, provided no law or contract is violated.

9) Forms & Checklists

- Leave Request & Certification (reference to City Personnel Policy)
- Coverage Plan & Handover Checklist that identifies work tasks
- Temporary Employee Onboarding Checklist
- Benefits Premium Notice Template
- IT Access & Asset Log
- Return-to-Work / Fitness-for-Duty Form
- City of Vergas Personnel Policy

Adopted on this 17th day of March 2026 by the City Council of the City of Vergas.

Julie Bruhn
Mayor

ATTEST:

Julie Lammers
City Clerk-Treasurer