

JOINT COMMUNICATION

Multi-Employer/UNA Collective Agreement Recommended Vacation Planning Guidelines January, 2006

Both managers and employees have expressed significant frustration with the annual vacation planning processes described in Article 17: Vacation With Pay in the Multi-Employer/UNA Collective Agreement. The following guidelines are the result of discussions of the Multi-Employer/UNA Joint Committee and are supported by both Employer and UNA representatives. Application of these guidelines by managers and employees will enhance the consistency, fairness and equity of the vacation planning processes.

1. Vacation Planner

- (a) Vacation Planners are to be posted by January 1st of each calendar year and remain posted for the period from January 1st to March 15th.
- (b) The Vacation Planner covers the entire vacation year including Christmas, New Years, Spring Break and Summer. The Collective Agreement language does not contemplate a separate vacation planning process for the December holiday season.
- (c) The vacation planning process is separate for each union group. However, when considering vacation requests, managers will consider skill mix issues.
- (d) The Vacation Planner is to be used only to request vacation time and should not be used to request or record any other types of time off.
- (e) It is recommended that all employers utilize the period from May 1st to April 30 as the period of time for which the vacation planner will apply. If this is a change from the current practice, the planning cycle will need to be slightly longer than 12 months for the year of transition. For example, if the vacation planning year was previously April 1st to March 31st, in order to move to a May 1st date, the vacation planning period for 2006/2007 will need to be from April 1, 2006 to April 30, 2007. This should assist with the issue of employers needing to provide vacation approvals by April 30th when this may be after the vacation year has already begun. This leaves the potential for an employee who is requesting vacation at the very beginning of the vacation year to potentially not receive approval for such vacation until very close to the vacation time. This recommended timeframe should also assist with the historical difficulty in planning vacations around the variable Spring Break timeframe.

2. Guidance regarding the number of vacations approved for the same time:

When the Vacation Planner is posted, the manager must provide a guideline regarding the reasonable number of employees covered by the Multi-Employer/UNA Collective Agreement that can be granted vacation at the same time. The purpose of providing this guideline is to assist employees in choosing their vacation preferences in such a way as to optimize vacation approvals.

- (a) This number is a guideline only. The actual number of individual vacation requests approved may differ from the guideline due to a number of variables including:
 - patient safety consideration,
 - staff skill mix requirement,

- replacement availability including casual employees, ability to adjust the schedule, ability to reassign employees from/to other areas, etc.
 - workload issues
 - other absences such as named holidays, disabilities, vacancies, etc.
- (b) The guideline regarding the number of employees granted vacation at the same time may vary for different times of the year. For example, it would not be unusual for the number of employees that can be allowed vacation at the same time to be different for the summer months or for December than for other times of the year.
- (c) The guidance number should refer to the number of employees that may be granted time off for each day. The guidance number should not be identified in hours and does not need to identify different numbers for each shift. For example, if a unit can likely provide for 2 employees to be off for a day shift, one for the evening shift and one for the night shift, this would be four employees (or perhaps two or three employees if the unit schedule needs to be revised to cover all of the shifts).
- (d) The guidance number(s) provided over the course of the year must at least be sufficient to cover the vacation liability for the area for the year. In other words, the guidance numbers must arithmetically cover the accrued vacation days for the employees working in the area. For example, if the annual vacation entitlement for all of the Employees on the unit totals 60 weeks, it would not be appropriate to indicate that only one Employee could take vacation at a time for the entire year. If the guidance number indicates that only a single Employee can take vacation at a time, then the total vacation entitlement for the unit must be equal to or less than 52 weeks. It is recommended that a standard guidance number be developed by taking the vacation liability for the unit in days divided by the number of employees in the unit, divided by the number of days or weeks in the year to determine a base guidance amount. This number can then be increased or decreased for certain times of the year in accordance with estimates regarding variables such as those described in (a) above.

3. Employee vacation requests

- (a) Employees should request their vacations on the Vacation Planner by March 15th. Employee requests received after March 15 will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis.
- (b) When requesting vacations on the Vacation Planner, employees should request vacation time on the basis of their anticipated vacation as the beginning of the vacation planning year (recommended as May 1st).
- (c) It is strongly recommended that senior employees indicate their vacation preferences on the Vacation Planner as soon as possible once the Vacation Planner is posted. This will assist employees with less seniority in choosing their vacation preferences and will reduce the number of vacation requests that need to be denied by managers.
- (d) Because supplementary vacation does not have to be utilized in any single vacation year, employees should only utilize the Vacation Planner to request earned supplementary vacation time that they want to utilize in this vacation planning period.
- (e) Employees should begin from the premise that vacation is to be requested and approved is a single block of time. These blocks of time include all regularly scheduled shifts, unscheduled days and designated days of rest.
- These blocks of time should be based upon the calendar rather than on the current shift rotation as shift schedules may change during the course of the year. If there is a specific time period required for an important event or for travel, employees should ensure that the entire block of time is requested on the Vacation Planner regardless of the current shift pattern. For example, if an employee wants July 1 – 15 off as vacation, they should ask for the entire block of time rather

than simply asking for the dates that are currently scheduled as work days during that time. The intent is to request and receive blocks of vacation time rather than individual days.

- Employees may request to divide vacation into smaller blocks. Employees should expect that requests to divide vacation into very small blocks (e.g. single days) may be reasonably denied.
- Any requests to carry vacation forward into the next vacation planning year should be discussed with the manager as far as possible in advance of the next vacation planning year. In the event that no vacation carry-over request is received, vacation will not carry forward into the next year by default. If vacation has not been requested as part of the vacation planning process, and no written request to carry the vacation into the next year has been received, managers will attempt to reach a mutually agreeable time to schedule any remaining annual vacation. If a mutually agreeable time cannot be identified, then an employee's vacation time may be scheduled by the manager in accordance with the Collective Agreement.

4. Vacation Approvals

- (a) Vacation request provided on the Vacation Planner will be approved or denied no later than April 30th.
- (b) Managers will attempt to approve or deny vacation requests that fall early in the vacation planning period (for example a vacation request for the first two weeks of May) as soon as possible after March 15th.
- (c) Vacation requests that are received after March 15 are to be approved or denied within 14 days of receiving these requests. If it is not possible to approve the vacation request within this timeframe, then the vacation request should be denied.
- (d) If multiple vacation requests are received after March 15 for the same time period, these requests will be considered in the order in which they are received. If such vacation requests are received at the same time, then the requests will be considered in order of seniority.
- (e) Once a vacation request has been denied, the request is no longer active. The Collective Agreement does not provide for a standing, or pending request. If circumstances change such that a previously denied vacation period becomes available, the employee will need to provide a new vacation request for consideration.

5. Vacation Cancellations or Changes

- (a) To be fair to other employees, employee requests to cancel, change or modify approved vacation after April 30th will only be considered in extenuating circumstances.
- (b) Employees cannot be on vacation and working for the same employer at the same time. As a result, employees cannot agree to work additional shifts on regularly scheduled days of work that have been approved as vacation days.
- (c) In the event that the employer *requires* an employee to come in to work at any time during the scheduled block of vacation days (i.e. regularly scheduled days, unscheduled days or designated days of rest), this is considered a vacation cancellation. This can only occur in an unforeseen emergency and requires that the employee be paid 2x their basic rate of pay plus have the cancelled vacation time rescheduled. The Employer shall also reimburse all non-refundable costs related to the cancellation of the vacation.

