A MENU OF WELLNESS POLICY IDEAS

North Carolina Center for Nonprofits

Nonprofits who want to make wellness accessible to all of their employees build a set of policies that promote and support wellness. These policies can include modifications and expansions to more traditional personnel policies such as expanding the amount of available vacation time, allowing sick time to be used for wellness, and ensuring that employees have time to care for their newborns and older children. These policies can also be innovative additions to your own personnel policies as organizations have a lot of flexibility in what they offer.

One of the first steps that you can do as a nonprofit to promote greater employee wellness is to review your current personnel policies with an eye towards wellness. Here are some questions you might ask:

- Can our staff access enough vacation time that they can rest and restore? Do staff feel like they can take their vacation? Why or why not?
- Does our sick time policy allow staff to support their mental health? What about their personal wellness practices?
- What level of health insurance benefits can we afford to offer? What level of health insurance benefits does our staff need and want?
- How are we supporting the parents and other caregivers on our staff? What levels of leave do we offer to new parents? Is it sufficient? What about those with other caregiving responsibilities?

Coming up with time-off policies that work for your nonprofit can take a lot of careful consideration of the needs of your staff and the dynamics of your organization's workflow. You can find more guidance and some common paid leave structures here.

There are also other creative ways to build wellness into your nonprofit's personnel policies. Here is a menu of ideas, many of which have been implemented in nonprofits as well as government agencies and business. We have also included examples from North Carolina nonprofits. Many of these are very simple policies and most are cost-free. Others may require more careful deliberation and the allocation of funds. You do not have to include all of the policies in the menu to be an organization that supports wellness.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES & REST

Alternative Work Schedules: Options for **compressed workweeks** (such as a 32- or 36-hour schedule) or staggered hours to assist with caretaking duties.

- **Flexible Schedules Policy from Student Action with Farmworkers**
- **Background and Sample Flextime Policy from Family Forward NC**

"Life-Happens" Leave: Small, immediate buckets of time (e.g., 16–24 hours annually) for sudden needs like **mental health days**, menstrual leave, school closures, **parental involvement**, or community activism.

Collective Time Off: Complete **organizational closures for one week** in summer and winter to ensure staff can disconnect without returning to an overflowing inbox.

Meeting-Free Days: Designating **one day a week** as a "no meetings day" (e.g., "No-Meeting Fridays") to reduce digital fatigue and allow uninterrupted focus time.

Sabbatical Leave: Paid extended leave (e.g., 1 to 3 months) for long-term employees (typically after 5 or 7 years) to completely recharge and counter systemic nonprofit burnout.

- **Sabbatical Policy from A Place at the Table**
- **Sabbatical Policy from Student Action with Farmworkers**

PHYSICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

Ergonomic Workspace Stipends: Financial support for remote, hybrid, or in-person workers to purchase supportive chairs, standing desks, or proper lighting.

Activity Breaks: Encouraging short, paid stretches during the workday or incorporating movement breaks into meetings that last longer than 90 minutes.



MENTAL HEALTH & CARE SUPPORT

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Confidential, employer-funded short-term counseling services and legal/financial consultations for staff and their households, typically offered through a third-party vendor or benefits provider. Employees can typically access the EAP at no cost to them, and employers pay for the service as part of their broader benefits strategy. EAPs include supports such as mental health counseling, family support, work-life resources, legal and financial referrals and more.

- Background and Sample EAP Policy from Family Forward NC

Compassionate Leave Expansion: Broadening traditional bereavement policies to include chosen family, close friends, or the loss of a pregnancy or pet.

- Background and Sample Bereavement Leave Policies from Grieve Leave
- Sample Bereavement Leave Policy from NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Sample Compassionate Extended Leave Policy from NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Caregiver Support: Explicitly permitting flexible hours or temporary shift adjustments to accommodate child or elder care needs without forcing employees to exhaust their PTO.

- Paid Family and Medical Leave Policy Template
- Example Sick and Safe Leave Policies that Support Caregiving



CULTURAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Digital Disconnect Boundaries: Setting clear expectations that employees are not required to read or respond to emails, Slack, or texts outside of their standard working hours.

- Example Right To Disconnect Policy

Professional Development Allowances: Stipends earmarked for personal growth, coaching, or mindfulness resources that support long-term career sustainability.