

**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY  
PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL**

<b>Topic:</b> VOLUNTARY TIME OFF (VTO) PROGRAM	<b>Date Issued:</b> Aug 15, 1992
<b>Section:</b> LEAVES OF ABSENCE WITHOUT PAY	<b>Date Revised:</b> May 28, 1993
<b>Number:</b> XIII.2.C	2/94-Renumbered; June 28, 1994, 5/2022

**PURPOSE:**

To identify requirements and procedures concerning the Voluntary Time Off (VTO) Program. VTO was developed as a form of personal unpaid leave of absence without pay to provide a method of reducing County costs during a period of serious economic difficulties rather than making permanent cuts of budgeted County positions.

**LEGAL BASIS:**

Civil Service Rule XI B, Leave of Absence Without Pay

Personnel Regulations, Section 168.1, Leave of Absence Without Pay, and parallel leave of absence without pay provisions of Memoranda of Understanding.

Personnel Regulations, Section 168.2, Absence Without Leave

See provisions of applicable Memorandum of Understanding regarding continuation of insurances during a leave of absence without pay.

**CROSS REFERENCES:**

Personnel Administrative Manual Section XIII.1, Personal/Educational Leave of Absence Without Pay.

Personnel Administrative Manual Section V.1.C.5, Voluntary Reduction in Work Hours.

**POLICY:**

A. CONDITIONS:

0. VTO (personnel leave of absence without pay) is available to employees only during periods designated by the County Administrative Officer as times of economic hardship. Effective June 28, 1994 this program has been adopted by the Board of Supervisors as an ongoing program.

1. Pledge/Enrollment Periods.

Under this program, employees pledge to take VTO on a quarter by quarter basis, using quarters as defined for the payroll system (e.g., the second quarter of FY 1992-93 is 9/12/92 through 12/24/92).

The Personnel Department will distribute notices three weeks prior to the beginning of each quarter to appraise employees of the program.

While employees must pledge of a quarterly basis, an employee and department may agree to a pledge during a quarter, for the remainder of the quarter.

2. Minimum Increment.

For employees in the DA Attorneys' Unit, and management employees (other than management trainees), VTO is taken in increments of one full work day.

For other employees (including management trainees), VTO personal leave without pay is taken in increments of one full hour.

3. Maximum Period.

While there is no absolute limitation on the amount of VTO that may be granted, there are factors which limit the period of continuous VTO. A leave of absence without pay which exceeds 160 continuous hours for a full-time employee (prorated for part-time employees--- e.g., 80 hours for a half-time employee) must be approved in advance by the Personnel Director and must meet the conditions for a leave of absence without pay for personal/educational purposes. (See PAM Section XIII.1.) Further, the conditions listed below, especially 5 f, may limit the duration of any period of VTO.

4. Other Limitations on Use. Notwithstanding the provisions of leave of absence without pay included in current Memoranda of Understanding, the appointing authority may grant a permanent or probationary employee voluntary time off without pay, subject to the following conditions:

- . VTO shall not exceed the scheduled hours of work in the employee's work period (one-week work period for most employees, two week work period for some employees).
- a. VTO shall be granted without requiring the employee to first use accumulated annual leave or vacation. An employee must use all accrued compensatory time prior to any leave of absence without pay.

- b. Employees must be in a paid status the entire work day before the beginning of any period of VTO and must be in a paid status the entire work day after the completion of any period of VTO.
  - c. VTO is not available to employees on other leave of absence without pay, nor is it to be used in combination with paid leave which must be exhausted prior to commencement of other leave without pay. (All accrued compensatory time must be taken off prior to the commencement of any leave of absence without pay. All accrued sick leave must be used prior to the commencement of any leave of absence without pay for medical reasons.)
  - d. VTO shall not be used to substitute for other leave provisions (e.g., annual leave, vacation, sick leave, compensatory time off, leave of absence without pay for personal/educational purposes, leave of absence without pay for medical reasons).
  - e. An employee using VTO must cover any deductions authorized from his/her pay and, if one pay period or more of VTO is taken, s/he must pay in advance for all insurances for that period.
  - f. Voluntary time off shall not be used in lieu of a voluntary reduction of hours where the employee wishes to reduce the hours worked in a week for a period of longer than one pay period.
5. Support.

The granting of any VTO is at the discretion of the appointing authority.

Department heads and supervisors are directed to make presentations to employees to positively reinforce the mutual benefits to the County and employee if they participate. Department heads and supervisors are directed to urge employees who are willing and able to take advantage of the program to assist the County during these difficult economic times.

It is recognized that, for post and certain other positions, the granting of VTO can result in additional costs which offset or exceed savings from VTO. In such cases, the purpose of VTO would not be achieved and the VTO request should not be authorized. VTO must result in savings to the County.

#### B. IMPACT OF VTO ON EMPLOYEE.

The following areas will be impacted by voluntary time off:

- 0. Base Pay - Base pay will be reduced equivalent with the reduction in hours worked. For example, going from 40 hours a week to 36 hours a week will result in a 10% reduction in base pay.

1. Take Home Pay - The actual reduction in take home pay will depend on the employee's tax bracket, deductions and number of dependents.
2. Seniority - Seniority is affected by voluntary time off only if a period of absence without pay exceeds 152 hours.
3. Step Increases - Eligibility for step increases is determined by hours worked within the authorized weekly number; and 2080 total hours are required regardless of whether an employee is full-time or part-time. Hours of VTO do not count towards eligibility for step advancement.
4. Overtime at Time and One-half - Overtime at time and a half, (payable in cash or compensatory time, depending on the representation unit), is dependent on the number of hours worked during the work period which applies. (Most employees have a one week work period, where hours worked in excess of 40 hours constitutes overtime. Other employees who are eligible for overtime have a two week work period, with overtime defined as hours worked in excess of 80 or 90 (depending on the representation unit) during the two week period). Voluntary time off (and any other leave of absence without pay) does not count towards overtime.
5. Holidays - An employee must be in a paid status the day before and the day after a holiday, to be eligible for holiday pay. An employee who uses VTO (personal leave without pay) the day before and/or the day after a holiday will not receive pay for the holiday.
6. Differentials - Differentials, such as night shift differential or bilingual differential, may be paid on hours worked or on hours worked plus hours of paid leave, depending upon the particular differential and representation unit. In general, the fewer hours worked, the less differential pay. Differentials are not received on VTO or any other leave of absence without pay.
7. Paid Leave Which is Accrued (annual leave, vacation, sick leave, administrative leave). These types of paid leave are accrued on an hourly basis for scheduled hours of work. A part-time employee will accrue such leave on a prorated basis. Paid leave is not accrued for VTO or any other form of leave of absence without pay.
  - . Employees are eligible to receive annual leave and sick leave after working hours of service equivalent to six months. Employees are eligible to receive vacation after hours of service equivalent to one year. VTO does not count towards hours of service, and thus will extend the period before an employee is eligible for accrual of paid leave.
  - a. Accrual of service to receive a higher increment of annual leave or vacation is based on scheduled hours worked. Thus, an employee must work 10,401 hours to receive the next higher accrual rate, regardless

of whether they are full or part-time. VTO does not count as time worked, and thus will extend the time before an employee receives the next higher accrual rate.

- b. For employees who receive administrative leave, the provisions of Personnel Regulations Section 166.5.B.1.c. should be reviewed regarding the impact of VTO during the first year when the initial credit is received.
8. Sick Leave - For those employees with accrued sick leave, including employees in the General Representation Unit who have sick leave balances remaining from accruals prior to 7/20/79, the rate at which sick leave accrued is converted to cash at the time of separation is dependent upon hours of service. VTO does not count as time worked for purposes of reaching a higher conversion rate.
9. Other Leave With Pay - (Jury Duty, Donation of Blood, Taking Examinations). An employee who takes VTO while on jury duty, donating blood, or taking examinations will not receive pay for the activity.
10. Insurances - To continue County insurance benefits coverage during a leave of absence without pay of a full pay period or more, the employee must pay their insurance premiums in accordance with the provisions of their respective Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If the leave of absence without pay is under 30 calendar days, the County will collect the amount due through payroll deductions after the employee returns to paid status in accordance with the provisions of their respective MOU.
11. Unemployment Benefits - Unemployment benefits are related (but not strictly proportionate) to earnings. Thus, VTO may result in reduced benefits depending upon the extent of VTO.
12. P.E.R.S. and Social Security (OASDI) - PERS retirement benefits and Social Security benefits may be affected to some extent by VTO. As benefits are based on years of covered service, age and earnings, no specific impact can be identified which applies to all employees. If an employee is within three years of retirement, he/she should contact the Employee Relations Division Manager in Personnel for more specific information.
13. Probation Period - The length of the probation period is based on

#### **PROCEDURE:**

- I. Requests for VTO must be submitted in writing to the employee's super visor and identify the specific VTO requested (e.g., hours per week, day per week, or specific period of days off).
- II. The employee's supervisor will provide a copy of Personnel Administrative Manual Section XIII.3 to the employee, and forward the request with a statement of workload impact, anticipated cost savings, and recommendation to the appointing authority.

- III. Any agreed upon VTO is to be recorded on the attached PER1089 form (revised 5/12/93) and signed by the employee and appointing authority.

The appointing authority is responsible for insuring that the VTO is consistent with the conditions and limitations of the VTO policy.

- IV. Approved VTO forms will be distributed as follows: one copy to employee; one copy to employee's supervisor; one copy to departmental payroll clerk; one copy to employee's personnel file.
- V. The employee's supervisor and departmental payroll clerk are responsible for review of the time card for proper recording of VTO.