



National Science Foundation
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Frequently Asked Questions Related to Dependent Care

Scope: The National Science Foundation (NSF) has developed a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to address policies and procedures for NSF-funded projects related to issues associated with dependent-care responsibilities of project personnel on awards made to institutions. In general, NSF policies and procedures support the ability of project personnel to address personal needs. **For purposes of these FAQs, NSF considers dependent care to include: child care, adoption, maternity/paternity leave, elder care, and extended family illness.**

These FAQs were developed using the appropriate policies defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) through the applicable OMB circulars, and NSF policy guidelines, (e.g., NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide, PAPPG). All documents are available online at the [NSF Policy Office website](#) .

- [Can the period of a federal award be extended for researchers who take a leave of absence due to dependent-care responsibilities, including the birth or adoption of a child?](#)
- [Can NSF award funds be used to pay for the replacement of project personnel who take a leave of absence due to dependent-care responsibilities?](#)
- [Can institutions/organizations use NSF award funds for dependent-care expenses?](#)
- [Can institutions/organizations use NSF award funds to pay for employee leave taken for dependent-care responsibilities?](#)
- [Can NSF award funds be used for travel and associated dependent-care expenses for dependents of individuals funded on an NSF award?](#)
- [Can conference/workshop awards or travel funds from research awards be used to support child care at conferences and workshops?](#)

1. **Can the period of a federal award be extended for researchers who take a leave of absence due to dependent-care responsibilities, including the birth or adoption of a child?**

No-cost extensions, processed in accordance with NSF-approved procedures (see NSF Grant Proposal Guide Chapter V.C), may be used when the extended absence of a PI or co-PI is necessary. For certain larger projects where a predetermined level of participation of Key Personnel is required, a substitute may need to be approved. In these cases, the NSF Program Officer should be advised well in advance if possible.

Notification of an absence or change in level of effort must be sent to NSF in accordance with the applicable grant general condition and/or terms of the specific agreement. (See NSF Grant General Condition Article 4, and Research Terms and Conditions Article 25).

2. **Can NSF award funds be used to pay for the replacement of project personnel who take a leave of absence due to dependent-care responsibilities?**

Yes. NSF awards may be used to pay the salaries of project support personnel that replace individuals who take a leave of absence due to dependent-care responsibilities.

3. **Can institutions/organizations use NSF award funds for dependent-care expenses?**

Costs incurred by the awardee organization under employee morale and welfare for dependent-care expenses (daycare facilities or other child/elder care arrangements) may be allowed, provided these types of expenses are charged through the application of fringe benefits or indirect costs (also known as Facilities & Administrative Costs). Any such charges must be made in accordance with established awardee institutional policy as approved by the cognizant agency and consistently applied to both Federal and non-Federal sponsors.

4. **Can institutions/organizations use NSF award funds to pay for employee leave taken for dependent-care responsibilities?**

Costs incurred by the awardee organization for paid time off (e.g., sick leave, vacation, or time off related to family-friendly institutional leave policies) to address dependent-care responsibilities may be allowed provided these types of expenses are charged through the application of fringe benefits or indirect costs. Any such charges must be made in accordance with established awardee institutional policy as approved by the cognizant agency and consistently applied to both Federal and non-Federal sponsors.

Direct charges to NSF awards for such costs are generally not appropriate unless specifically approved by the cognizant federal agency in the negotiated rate agreement. In addition, in order to be allocable to a given NSF award, direct charges should be limited in proportion to the amount of time or effort the employee actually devoted to and/or accrued (or would have accrued) while working on the NSF grant-supported project.

5. **Can NSF award funds be used for travel and associated dependent-care expenses for dependents of individuals funded on an NSF award?**

NSF award funds may not be used for domestic travel costs or associated dependent-care expenses for individuals traveling on NSF award funds. Travel costs associated with dependents may be allowable for International travel in accordance with Award and Administration Guide Chapter V.B.4, which contains several stipulations, including that travel must be continuous for a period of six months or more.

6. **Can conference/workshop awards or travel funds from research awards be used to support child care at conferences and workshops?**

NSF award funds may not be used to pay for travel costs or expenses related to onsite care (e.g., daycare) for dependents of participants at NSF-sponsored conferences and workshops. NSF-sponsored conferences and workshops are encouraged to consider child-care services to ease the burden on attendees, but the costs of such services are the responsibility of those that choose to utilize the accommodations.