

SEMN Synod Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines Task Force

Executive Notes

September 4, 2025

Members: Reverend Jay Dahlvang (Rostered At-Large), Mr. Ron Jenson (Lay At-Large), Ms. Jennifer Levison (Lay Synod Council), Reverend Barb Streed (Synod Staff Liaison)

The task force recommends, the SEMN Synod Council, the following editorial changes to the proposed 2026 SEMN Synod Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines:

#1 - Pages 10 and 18 under the subtitle **Other Considerations**

The task force recommends adding language about consideration of additional compensation for rostered ministers with advanced degrees and for whom supervision of staff is a part of their call. The task force's recommendation is to add the following language to this section as noted in yellow highlight:

The total compensation package should also consider workload, additional education, and effectiveness of the rostered leader.

- Ministers of Word and Sacrament with advanced degrees: DMin, PhD, STM, or other degrees the congregation deems germane to their ministry the congregation may add \$1000.
- For individuals supervising other staff, it is recommended adding \$750 to \$2000, commensurate with duties.

#2 - Pages 12 and 20 under the subtitle **Holidays**

The task force recommends adding Juneteenth to the list of holidays that are granted as days off in addition to vacation days as noted below in yellow highlight:

Holidays should be granted as days off in addition to vacation days. When the services of the rostered minister are required on recognized holidays, time off with pay should be granted at another time, which causes minimal disruption to the congregation. The following days are traditionally considered paid holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Easter Sunday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

#3 - Pages 13 and 21 under the previous subtitle **Family Leave** now subtitled **Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) and Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST)**

The task force recommends striking the previous language about Family Leave as noted below in red:

Family Leave is paid time off with full salary and benefits for the care of a newborn or newly adopted child. During Family Leave the rostered leader is released from all work-related responsibilities and tasks. Other provision for all pastoral/congregation care and other work-related contingencies should be planned to serve the congregation/organization during the time of leave. A minimum of 6 weeks is expected as Family Leave for all rostered leaders.

It is important to note that Paid Family and Medical Leave is a new program launching for Minnesotans in 2026. It provides paid time off when a serious health condition prevents you from working, when you need time to care for a family member or a new child, for certain military-related events or for certain personal safety issues. (Source: www.mn.gov.)

There are two main types of leave:

- **Family Leave** to care for a family member with a serious health condition, or if you're bonding with a new baby or child in your family.
- **Medical Leave** when your own serious health condition prevents you from working.

Additionally, you will be able to take leave to support a family member in the military deploying overseas, or if you or a family member are facing a significant personal safety issue.

It is recommended that each congregation develop an explicit written policy relating to Family Leave

The task force recommends adding the following language, as noted in yellow highlight below, with the intent of bringing clarity to the MN state laws and also provides a link to resources that will help congregations understand how to comply with these laws:

Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) and Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST)

PFML and ESST are two distinct programs in Minnesota with different purposes and start dates. ESST, which started in 2024, provides short-term, accrued paid time off for everyday illnesses and emergencies. PFML, taking effect January 1, 2026, is a state-administered wage replacement benefit for extended absences for major life events, like bonding with a new child or caring for a seriously ill family member. (https://mn.gov/deed/assets/paid-leave-comparison-acc_tcm1045-611627.pdf)

Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST)

- **Purpose:** Covers short-term needs, such as personal or family illness, medical appointments, and safety issues, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, or stalking.
- **Accrual:** Eligible employees accrue paid time off based on hours worked.
- **Effective Date:** January 1, 2024.

Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)

- **Purpose:** Provides wage replacement for longer-term absences for significant life events, such as bonding with a new child, caring for a family member with a serious health condition, or the employee's own serious health condition.
- **Administration:** A state-administered insurance program.
- **Effective Date:** January 1, 2026.

All employers in the state of Minnesota, including congregations, are required to comply with Minnesota's ESST and PFML laws. This also applies to rostered ministers. Please refer to the following link which explains how to comply with the new PFML law:

<https://mn.gov/deed/paidleave/employers/faq/>

The task force recommends, to the SEMN Synod Council, the following substantive change to the proposed 2026 SEMN Synod Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines:

#4 - Pages 9-10 and 17-18 under the subtitle 2026 Salary Scale

The task force considered the following four factors when discerning a recommended % increase to the proposed 2026 SEMN Synod Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines:

- 1 – Upcoming year's COLA (estimated 2.7%)
- 2 – Portico health insurance cost increase (4%) [to note: national average is between 8.5%-11%]
- 3 – Geographical area's economic realities for both rostered leaders and congregations
- 4 – Region 3 Synod increases and rankings (see below)

Given all considerations, the task force is recommending that the 2026 guidelines reflect a **3% increase in base salary** over the 2025 guidelines base salary.