

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

EMPLOYEE LEAVES

What should an employee with symptoms do?

Stay at home when sick. Any employee with symptoms of a communicable illness (such as fever, coughing, sore throat, congestion, and/or shortness of breath) should go home immediately. Do not return to work for:

1. At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND
2. At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

An employee is unavailable to work or be called upon as a Disaster Service Worker for reasons including illness, caring for a sick family member, or school/daycare closures. How does the employee receive pay?

1. Accrued sick leave
2. All other accrued leave balances, such as vacation, floating holiday, compensatory time earned (CTE), or management leave

Employees needing time off on or after April 1, 2020 may also be eligible for Emergency Paid Sick Leave (see EPSL below).

► What is Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL)?

Pursuant to the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (H.R.6201), full-time employees needing time off work on or after April 1, 2020, may be eligible for an additional 80 hours of sick leave (pro-rated for part-time permanent employees). Employees must certify that they are unable to work or telework due to one of the following reasons:

1. Employee is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19
2. Health care provider has advised the employee to self-quarantine
3. Employee is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever [defined as 100.4° F or greater using an oral thermometer], coughing, and/or shortness of breath) and seeking a medical diagnosis
4. Employee is caring for someone (an immediate family member, roommate, or a similar person with whom they have a relationship that creates an expectation that they would care for the person) subject to a shelter-in-place order or quarantine advised by a health care provider
5. Employee is caring for their child under 18 years of age whose school or place of care has been closed, or whose childcare provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 precautions, and another suitable individual is not available to provide care (such as a co-parent, co-guardian, or the usual child care provider)

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

6. Employee is experiencing a substantially-similar condition

EPSL hours will expire on December 31, 2020. Employees are not entitled to reimbursement of any unused EPSL hours upon expiration or upon termination, resignation, retirement or other separation from employment.

▶ **What are the steps an employee should take to request EPSL?**

Employees will need to complete and submit a [COVID-19 Request for Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#) form with the appropriate supporting documentation to their department's HR Liaison or to the Human Resources department at pchrd@placer.ca.gov.

Employees should not be applying any time for EPSL on their timesheets unless the employee has formally requested the benefit and has been approved through Human Resources in the Workday system. EPSL is being processed as a Workday transaction and is not an automatic benefit.

▶ **How does the employee know if EPSL has been approved?**

Once the completed form and documentation are received, Human Resources will determine the employee's eligibility and notify the employee and the department if approved. If it is determined that the employee is eligible for the EPSL, the employee will receive information and instructions on the use of the leave and the full allotment of hours will become available through the Workday system for COVID-19 related absences. After the allotment of hours are posted in Workday, the supervisor will review and approve individual requests to utilize the EPSL hours based on COVID-19 related reasons as listed above.

▶ **Is the employee required to submit a new request form for every absence?**

Employees are not required to complete additional certification forms for every EPSL request for time off following the initial approval. Instead, the employee will submit the request to utilize EPSL by selecting "**COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave**" in Workday. The employee's supervisor should only approve EPSL for qualifying COVID-19 related reasons as listed above.

If the employee requests to utilize EPSL hours intermittently for school/childcare closures, the employee and the supervisor should work together to develop a schedule for intermittent leave that allows the employee to take the leave when reasonable but still meets the needs of the department. Additional guidelines for utilizing EPSL intermittently are outlined below.

▶ **How does the employee report EPSL leave on their timesheets?**

If the employee was determined eligible and approved, the EPSL hours will be viewable in Workday as "**COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave**" in the Time and Leave > Time Off Balance tab in Workday. These hours are separate from the regular sick leave accrual and will be available for the employee to utilize as a Time Off on their timesheet for COVID-19 related reasons listed above.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

Employees should not be applying any time for EPSL on their timesheets unless the employee has formally requested the benefit and has been approved through Human Resources in the Workday system.

EPSL hours can be utilized prior to the use of accrued leave balances for COVID-19 related time off (i.e., accrued leave hours do not have to be exhausted prior to use of COVID-19 EPSL).

► Can EPSL be taken intermittently?

EPSL **cannot** be taken intermittently unless the employee is taking time off to care for their child under 18 whose school or place of care has been closed or is unavailable due to COVID-19 precautions and another suitable individual is not available to provide such care. Guidelines for intermittent time off for school/childcare closures are as follows:

- Intermittent time off must be taken in increments of two (2) hours or more
- Employees must work a minimum of 20 hours per week when taking intermittent time off
- Employee and the department should work together to develop a schedule for intermittent leave that allows the employee to take the leave when reasonable but still meets the needs of the department

What is the rate of pay for the 80-Hour EPSL?

EPSL hours will be paid at the employee's full regular rate of pay.

What if an employee is unable to work for an extended period of time due to caring for an eligible child at home because of school or childcare closure?

For leaves beginning on or after April 1, 2020, the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) [FFCRA] provides for the Expanded Family and Medical Leave Act (EFMLA) benefits. This amendment provides eligible employees with 12 weeks of protected leave in order to care for a child under 18 or dependent adult child who is home because of a school or daycare closure. There is a 10-day waiting period for paid benefits, after which employees are entitled to paid leave at two-thirds (2/3) their regular rate of pay. Employees may utilize EPSL or other accrued leaves during the waiting period and may supplement the 2/3 pay with their accrued leave balances to achieve 100% of their regular rate of pay. Employees who exhaust all accrued leave balances may also be eligible to supplement with Unemployment Insurance administered by the State of California.

► Are all employees eligible for Expanded FMLA (EFMLA)?

The FFCRA legislation recognizes the need to maintain critical services and defines those who may be excluded as:

Anyone who serves as a law enforcement officer, correctional institution personnel, physician, nurse, public health personnel, emergency management personnel, 911

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

operator, child welfare worker and service provider, public works personnel, and persons with skills or training in operating specialized equipment or other skills needed to provide aid in a declared emergency, as well as individuals who work for such facilities employing these individuals and whose work is necessary to maintain the operation of the facility.

Placer County deemed the need to exclude health care providers and emergency responders from the extended leave associated with EFMLA to ensure public health, public safety, and continuity of these critical operations. Therefore, not all employees are eligible for EFMLA if their job classification within their department meets the exclusion criteria for EFMLA, as determined by their Department Head.

► **What are the steps an employee should take to request the new EFMLA for school or daycare closures?**

Employees need to complete and submit a [COVID-19 Request for Expanded FMLA](#) form with the appropriate supporting documentation to their department's HR Liaison or to the Human Resources department at pchrd@placer.ca.gov.

What if an employee cannot work due to being diagnosed with COVID-19?

An employee who has contracted COVID-19 may be eligible for a protected leave of absence under the FMLA/CFRA and wage replacement such as State Disability Insurance, depending on the labor group.

What if an employee needs to take time off work to care for an ill qualifying family member?

The employee may be eligible to utilize protected leave for a leave of absence from work under the FMLA/CFRA to care for a qualifying family member if the family member has contracted COVID-19 and is considered to have a serious health condition. In addition to utilizing accrued leave balances, wage replacement such as Paid Family Leave administered by the State of California may be available depending on the labor group.

What should an employee do if they do not have enough accrued leave balances to cover a voluntary absence caused by COVID-19?

If an employee exhausts available leave balances, unpaid hours (UPH) may be applied. If the employee has questions, they should discuss the matter with their supervisor and contact Human Resources.

What if an employee is not able to make use of vacation leave during this emergency period?

Temporary, one-time changes to the County's vacation cash out policy have been made due to COVID-19. Rules that an irrevocable form must have been received by December 31, 2019 in order to cash out and that one half of your vacation hours must be accrued prior to cash out have been temporarily suspended.

COVID-19 FAQs for Employees

APRIL 23, 2020

Commencing in Pay Period 21, employees may cash out up to 80 hours of vacation leave accrued, according to the following terms:

1. Employees must be within 80 hours of the applicable vacation cap at the close of Pay Period 20 to be eligible to cash out.
2. During this temporary change from Pay Period 21 through Pay Period 26, employees can only cash out up to 80 hours and are limited to no more than two requests.
3. A vacation cash out form should be completed for each request.
4. The maximum total vacation hours that can be cashed out in calendar year 2020 is still 100 hours, for those who qualify.

► **What other benefit programs may employees be eligible to utilize?**

Disability Insurance - Sick or Quarantined (PPEO employees)

If an employee is unable to work due to having or being exposed to COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional), they can file a Disability Insurance (DI) Claim. DI provides short-term benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or partial loss of wages due to a non-work-related illness, injury, or pregnancy.

Paid Family Leave - Caregiving (PPEO employees)

If an employee is unable to work because they are caring for an ill or quarantined family member with COVID-19 (certified by a medical professional), they can file a Paid Family Leave (PFL) claim. PFL provides up to six weeks of benefit payments to eligible workers who have a full or partial loss of wages because they need time off work to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child.

Unemployment - Reduced Work Hours, or Shut Down

If an employee's hours have been reduced or the department has shut down operations due to COVID-19, the employee can file an Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim. UI provides partial wage replacement benefit payments to workers who lose their job or have their hours reduced through no fault of their own.

If the employee has questions, they should contact Human Resources.