



# Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employer Paid Leave Requirements

The **Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act)** requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19.[<sup>1</sup>] The Department of Labor's (Department) Wage and Hour Division (WHD) administers and enforces the new law's paid leave requirements. These provisions will apply from the effective date through December 31, 2020.

Generally, the Act provides that covered employers must provide to **all employees**:<sup>[2]</sup>

- *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of **paid sick leave** at the employee's regular rate of pay* where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
- *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of **paid sick leave** at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay* because the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), or care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19, and/or the employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Treasury and Labor.

A covered employer must provide to **employees that it has employed for at least 30 days**:<sup>[3]</sup>

- *Up to an additional 10 weeks of **paid expanded family and medical leave** at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay* where an employee is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

**Covered Employers:** The paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA apply to certain public employers, and private employers with fewer than 500 employees.[4] Most employees of the federal government are covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was not amended by this Act, and are therefore not covered by the expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA. However, federal employees covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act are covered by the paid sick leave provision.

Small businesses with fewer than 50 employees may qualify for exemption from the requirement to provide leave due to school closings or child care unavailability if the leave requirements would jeopardize the viability of the business as a going concern.

### **Qualifying Reasons for Leave:**

Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for paid sick time if the employee is unable to work (**or unable to telework**) due to a need for leave because the employee:

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;
3. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2);
5. is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19; or
6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.

Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for expanded family leave if the employee is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19.

### **Duration of Leave:**

**For reasons (1)-(4) and (6):** A full-time employee is eligible for up to 80 hours of leave, and a part-time employee is eligible for the number of hours of leave that the employee works on average over a two-week period.

**For reason (5):** A full-time employee is eligible for up to 12 weeks of leave at 40 hours a week, and a part-time employee is eligible for leave for the number of hours that the employee is normally scheduled to work over that period.

**Calculation of Pay:**<sup>[5]</sup>

**For leave reasons (1), (2), or (3):** employees taking leave shall be paid at either their regular rate or the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$511 per day and \$5,110 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

**For leave reasons (4) or (6):** employees taking leave shall be paid at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$200 per day and \$2,000 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

**For leave reason (5):** employees taking leave shall be paid at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$200 per day and \$12,000 in the aggregate (over a 12-week period—two weeks of paid sick leave followed by up to 10 weeks of paid expanded family and medical leave).<sup>[6]</sup>

**Tax Credits:** Covered employers qualify for dollar-for-dollar reimbursement through tax credits for all qualifying wages paid under the FFCRA. Qualifying wages are those paid to an employee who takes leave under the Act for a qualifying reason, up to the appropriate per diem and aggregate payment caps. Applicable tax credits also extend to amounts paid or incurred to maintain health insurance coverage. For more information, please see the Department of the Treasury's website.

**Employer Notice:** Each covered employer must post in a conspicuous place on its premises a notice of FFCRA requirements.<sup>[7]</sup>

**Prohibitions:** Employers may not discharge, discipline, or otherwise discriminate against any employee who takes paid sick leave under the FFCRA and files a complaint or institutes a proceeding under or related to the FFCRA.

**Penalties and Enforcement:** Employers in violation of the first two weeks' paid sick time or unlawful termination provisions of the FFCRA will be subject to the penalties and enforcement described in Sections 16 and 17 of the Fair Labor Standards Act. 29 U.S.C. 216; 217. Employers in violation of the provisions providing for up to an additional 10 weeks of paid leave to care for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) are subject to the enforcement provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act.

The Department will observe a temporary period of non-enforcement for the first 30 days after the Act takes effect, so long as the employer has acted reasonably and in good faith to comply with the Act. For purposes of this non-enforcement position, “good faith” exists when violations are remedied and the employee is made whole as soon as practicable by the employer, the violations were not willful, and the Department receives a written commitment from the employer to comply with the Act in the future.

[1] Wage and Hour Division does not administer this aspect of the law, but notes that every dollar of required paid leave (plus the cost of the employer’s health insurance premiums during leave) will be **100%** covered by a dollar-for-dollar refundable tax credit available to the employer. For more information, please see the Department of the Treasury’s website.

[2] Employers of Health Care Providers or Emergency Responders may elect to exclude such employees from eligibility for the leave provided under the Act.

[3] Employers of Health Care Providers or Emergency Responders may elect to exclude such employees from eligibility for the leave provided under the Act.

[4] Certain provisions may not apply to certain employers with fewer than 50 employees. See Department FFCRA regulations (expected April 2020).

[5] Paid sick time provided under this Act does not carry over from one year to the next. Employees are not entitled to reimbursement for unused leave upon termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment.

[6] An employee may elect to substitute any accrued vacation leave, personal leave, or medical or sick leave for the first two weeks of partial paid leave under this section.

[7] The Department will issue a model notice no later than March 25, 2020.

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# Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employee Paid Leave Rights

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Generally, the Act provides that employees of covered employers are eligible for:

- *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of **paid sick leave** at the employee's regular rate of pay* where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
- *Two weeks (up to 80 hours) of **paid sick leave** at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay* because the employee is unable to work because of a bona fide need to care for an individual subject to quarantine (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order or advice of a health care provider), or to care for a child (under 18 years of age) whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19, and/or the employee is experiencing a substantially similar condition as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of the Treasury and Labor; and
- *Up to an additional 10 weeks of **paid expanded family and medical leave** at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay* where an employee, who has been employed for at least 30 calendar days, is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or child care provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

**Covered Employers:** The paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA apply to certain public employers, and private employers with fewer than 500 employees.[1] Most employees of the federal government are covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act, which was not amended by this Act, and are therefore not covered by the expanded family and medical leave provisions of the FFCRA. However, federal employees covered by Title II of the Family and Medical Leave Act are covered by the paid sick leave provision.

Small businesses with fewer than 50 employees may qualify for exemption from the requirement to provide leave due to school closings or child care unavailability if the leave requirements would jeopardize the viability of the business as a going concern.

**Eligible Employees:** *All employees* of covered employers are eligible for two weeks of paid sick time for specified reasons related to COVID-19. *Employees employed for at least 30 days* are eligible for up to an additional 10 weeks of paid family leave to care for a child under certain circumstances related to COVID-19.[2]

**Notice:** Where leave is foreseeable, an employee should provide notice of leave to the employer as is practicable. After the first workday of paid sick time, an employer may require employees to follow reasonable notice procedures in order to continue receiving paid sick time.

### **Qualifying Reasons for Leave:**

Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for paid sick time if the employee is unable to work (**or unable to telework**) due to a need for leave because the employee:

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;
3. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2);
5. is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19; or
6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.



Under the FFCRA, an employee qualifies for expanded family leave if the employee is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19.

### **Duration of Leave:**

**For reasons (1)-(4) and (6):** A full-time employee is eligible for 80 hours of leave, and a part-time employee is eligible for the number of hours of leave that the employee works on average over a two-week period.

**For reason (5):** A full-time employee is eligible for up to 12 weeks of leave (two weeks of paid sick leave followed by up to 10 weeks of paid expanded family & medical leave) at 40 hours a week, and a part-time employee is eligible for leave for the number of hours that the employee is normally scheduled to work over that period.

### **Calculation of Pay:[3]**

**For leave reasons (1), (2), or (3):** employees taking leave are entitled to pay at either their regular rate or the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$511 per day and \$5,110 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

**For leave reasons (4) or (6):** employees taking leave are entitled to pay at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$200 per day and \$2,000 in the aggregate (over a 2-week period).

**For leave reason (5):** employees taking leave are entitled to pay at 2/3 their regular rate or 2/3 the applicable minimum wage, whichever is higher, up to \$200 per day and \$12,000 in the aggregate (over a 12-week period). [4]

[1] Certain provisions may not apply to certain employers with fewer than 50 employees. See Department FFCRA regulations (expected April 2020).

[2] Under the Act, special rules apply for Health Care Providers and Emergency Responders.

[3] Paid sick time provided under this Act does not carryover from one year to the next. Employees are not entitled to reimbursement for unused leave upon termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment.

[4] An employee may elect to substitute any accrued vacation leave, personal leave, or medical or sick leave for the first two weeks of partial paid leave under this section.

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# Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Questions and Answers

As provided under the legislation, the U.S. Department of Labor will be issuing implementing regulations. Additionally, as warranted, the Department will continue to provide compliance assistance to employers and employees on their responsibilities and rights under the FFCRA.

## DEFINITIONS

**“Paid sick leave”** – means paid leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act.

**“Expanded family and medical leave”** – means paid leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- 1. What is the effective date of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which includes the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act and the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act?**

The FFCRA’s paid leave provisions are effective on April 1, 2020, and apply to leave taken between April 1, 2020, and December 31, 2020.

- 2. As an employer, how do I know if my business is under the 500-employee threshold and therefore must provide paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave?**

You have fewer than 500 employees if, at the time your employee’s leave is to be taken, you employ fewer than 500 full-time and part-time employees within the United States, which includes any State of the United States, the District of Columbia, or any Territory or possession of the United States. In making this determination, you should include employees on leave; temporary employees who are jointly employed by you and

another employer (regardless of whether the jointly-employed employees are maintained on only your or another employer's payroll); and day laborers supplied by a temporary agency (regardless of whether you are the temporary agency or the client firm if there is a continuing employment relationship). Workers who are independent contractors under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), rather than employees, are not considered employees for purposes of the 500-employee threshold.

Typically, a corporation (including its separate establishments or divisions) is considered to be a single employer and its employees must each be counted towards the 500-employee threshold. Where a corporation has an ownership interest in another corporation, the two corporations are separate employers unless they are joint employers under the FLSA with respect to certain employees. If two entities are found to be joint employers, all of their common employees must be counted in determining whether paid sick leave must be provided under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act and expanded family and medical leave must be provided under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act.

In general, two or more entities are separate employers unless they meet the integrated employer test under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). If two entities are an integrated employer under the FMLA, then employees of all entities making up the integrated employer will be counted in determining employer coverage for purposes of expanded family and medical leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act.

**3. If I am a private sector employer and have 500 or more employees, do the Acts apply to me?**

No. Private sector employers are only required to comply with the Acts if they have fewer than 500 employees.<sup>[1]</sup>

**4. If providing child care-related paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave at my business with fewer than 50 employees would jeopardize the viability of my business as a going concern, how do I take advantage of the small business exemption?**

To elect this small business exemption, you should document why your business with fewer than 50 employees meets the criteria set forth by the Department, which will be addressed in more detail in forthcoming regulations.

You should not send any materials to the Department of Labor when seeking a small business exemption for paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave.

**5. How do I count hours worked by a part-time employee for purposes of paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave?**

A part-time employee is entitled to leave for his or her average number of work hours in a two-week period. Therefore, you calculate hours of leave based on the number of hours the employee is normally scheduled to work. If the normal hours scheduled are unknown, or if the part-time employee's schedule varies, you may use a six-month average to calculate the average daily hours. Such a part-time employee may take paid sick leave for this number of hours per day for up to a two-week period, and may take expanded family and medical leave for the same number of hours per day up to ten weeks after that.

If this calculation cannot be made because the employee has not been employed for at least six months, use the number of hours that you and your employee agreed that the employee would work upon hiring. And if there is no such agreement, you may calculate the appropriate number of hours of leave based on the average hours per day the employee was scheduled to work over the entire term of his or her employment.

**6. When calculating pay due to employees, must overtime hours be included?**

Yes. The Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act requires you to pay an employee for hours the employee would have been normally scheduled to work even if that is more than 40 hours in a week.

However, the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act requires that paid sick leave be paid only up to 80 hours over a two-week period. For example, an employee who is scheduled to work 50 hours a week may take 50 hours of paid sick leave in the first week and 30 hours of paid sick leave in the second week. In any event, the total number of hours paid under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act is capped at 80.

If the employee's schedule varies from week to week, please see the answer to Question 5, because the calculation of hours for a full-time employee with a varying schedule is the same as that for a part-time employee.

Please keep in mind the daily and aggregate caps placed on any pay for paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave as described in the answer to Question 7.

Please note that pay does not need to include a premium for overtime hours under either the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act or the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act.

## 7. **As an employee, how much will I be paid while taking paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave under the FFCRA?**

It depends on your normal schedule as well as why you are taking leave.

If you are taking paid sick leave because you are unable to work or telework due to a need for leave because you (1) are subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19; (2) have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19; or (3) are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking medical diagnosis, you will receive for each applicable hour the greater of:

- your regular rate of pay,
- the federal minimum wage in effect under the FLSA, or
- the applicable State or local minimum wage.

In these circumstances, you are entitled to a maximum of \$511 per day, or \$5,110 total over the entire paid sick leave period.

If you are taking paid sick leave because you are: (1) caring for an individual who is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19 or an individual who has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19; (2) caring for your child whose school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 related reasons; or (3) experiencing any other substantially-similar condition that may arise, as specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, you are entitled to compensation at 2/3 of the greater of the amounts above.

Under these circumstances, you are subject to a maximum of \$200 per day, or \$2,000 over the entire two week period.

If you are taking expanded family and medical leave, you may take paid sick leave for the first ten days of that leave period, or you may substitute any accrued vacation leave, personal leave, or medical or sick leave you have under your employer's policy. For the following ten weeks, you will be paid for your leave at an amount no less than 2/3 of your regular rate of pay for the hours you would be normally scheduled to work. The regular rate of pay used to calculate this amount must be at or above the federal minimum wage, or the applicable state or local minimum wage. However, you will not receive more than \$200 per day or \$12,000 for the twelve weeks that include both paid

sick leave and expanded family and medical leave when you are on leave to care for your child whose school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 related reasons.

To calculate the number of hours for which you are entitled to paid leave, please see the answers to Questions 5-6 that are provided in this guidance.

**8. What is my regular rate of pay for purposes of the FFCRA?**

For purposes of the FFCRA, the regular rate of pay used to calculate your paid leave is the average of your regular rate over a period of up to six months prior to the date on which you take leave.[2] If you have not worked for your current employer for six months, the regular rate used to calculate your paid leave is the average of your regular rate of pay for each week you have worked for your current employer.

If you are paid with commissions, tips, or piece rates, these wages will be incorporated into the above calculation.

You can also compute this amount for each employee by adding all compensation that is part of the regular rate over the above period and divide that sum by all hours actually worked in the same period.

**9. May I take 80 hours of paid sick leave for my self-quarantine and then another amount of paid sick leave for another reason provided under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act?**

No. You may take up to two weeks—or ten days—(80 hours for a full-time employee, or for a part-time employee, the number of hours equal to the average number of hours that the employee works over a typical two-week period) of paid sick leave for any combination of qualifying reasons. However, the total number of hours for which you receive paid sick leave is capped at 80 hours under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act.

**10. If I am home with my child because his or her school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, do I get paid sick leave, expanded family and medical leave, or both—how do they interact?**

You may be eligible for both types of leave, but only for a total of twelve weeks of paid leave. You may take both paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave to care for your child whose school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 related reasons. The Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act provides for an initial two weeks of paid leave. This period thus covers the first ten workdays of expanded family and medical leave, which are otherwise unpaid under the Emergency and Family Medical Leave Expansion Act unless the you elect to use



existing vacation, personal, or medical or sick leave under your employer's policy. After the first ten workdays have elapsed, you will receive 2/3 of your regular rate of pay for the hours you would have been scheduled to work in the subsequent ten weeks under the Emergency and Family Medical Leave Expansion Act.

Please note that you can only receive the additional ten weeks of expanded family and medical leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act for leave to care for your child whose school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 related reasons.

**11. Can my employer deny me paid sick leave if my employer gave me paid leave for a reason identified in the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act prior to the Act going into effect?**

No. The Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act imposes a new leave requirement on employers that is effective beginning on April 1, 2020.

**12. Is all leave under the FMLA now paid leave?**

No. The only type of family and medical leave that is paid leave is expanded family and medical leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act when such leave exceeds ten days. This includes only leave taken because the employee must care for a child whose school or place of care is closed, or child care provider is unavailable, due to COVID-19 related reasons.

**13. Are the paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave requirements retroactive?**

No.

**14. How do I know whether I have “been employed for at least 30 calendar days by the employer” for purposes of expanded family and medical leave?**

You are considered to have been employed by your employer for at least 30 calendar days if your employer had you on its payroll for the 30 calendar days immediately prior to the day your leave would begin. For example, if you want to take leave on April 1, 2020, you would need to have been on your employer's payroll as of March 2, 2020.

If you have been working for a company as a temporary employee, and the company subsequently hires you on a full-time basis, you may count any days you previously worked as a temporary employee toward this 30-day eligibility period.

[1] If you are a Federal employee, you are eligible to take paid sick leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act. But only some Federal employees are eligible to take expanded family and medical leave under the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act. Your eligibility will depend on whether you are covered under Title I or Title II of the Family Medical Leave Act. The Department encourages Federal employees to discuss questions about their eligibility for expanded family and medical leave with their employers or with the Office of Personnel Management. Additional FAQs regarding public sector employers will be forthcoming.

[2] If you are a Federal employee, the State or local minimum wage would be used to calculate the wages owed to you only if the Federal agency that employs you has broad authority to set your compensation and has decided to use the State or local minimum wage.

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