

FAMILY CARE AND MEDICAL LEAVE

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Eligibility

The District shall grant family care and medical leave of a minimum of 12 work weeks during any 12-month period, to eligible employees, for the following reasons: (Government Code 12945.2; 29 USC 2601)

1. Because of the birth of a child of the employee or placement of a child with the employee in connection with the adoption or foster care of the child by the employee;
2. To care for the employee's child, parent or spouse with a serious health condition;
3. Because of the employee's own serious health condition that makes him/her unable to perform the functions of his/her position. However, this does not include leave taken for disability on account of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions.

The District shall not interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided to an eligible employee under the law. Also, the District shall not discharge or discriminate against any employee for opposing any practice made unlawful by, or because of his/her involvement in any proceedings related to the family care and medical leave. (Government Code 12945.2; 29 USC 2615)

Definitions

Child means a biological, adopted, or foster child, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child of a person standing in loco parentis as long as the child is under 18 years of age or an adult dependent child. (29 USC 2611; Government Code 12945.2)

Eligible employee means an employee who has at least 12 months of service with the employer, and who has at least 1,250 hours of service with the employer during the previous 12-month period. (29 USC 2611; Government Code 12945.2)

Full-time teachers are deemed to meet the 1,250 hours of service requirement. (29 CFR 825.110)

Parent means a biological, foster, or adoptive parent, a stepparent, a legal guardian, or another person who stood in loco parentis to the employee when the employee was a child. (29 USC 2611; Government Code 12945.2)

Serious health condition means an illness, injury, impairment, physical, or mental condition that involves either of the following: (29 USC 2611; Government Code 12945.2)

1. Inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential health care facility;
2. Continuing treatment or continuing supervision by a health care provider.

Rights to Reinstatement and Maintenance of Benefits

Upon granting an employee's request for family care and medical leave, the Superintendent or designee shall guarantee to reinstate the employee in the same or a comparable position when the leave ends. (29 USC 2614; Government Code 12945.2)

An employee who takes leave has no greater right to reinstatement than if he/she had been continuously employed during the leave period. If the District reduces its work force during the leave period and the employee is laid off for legitimate reasons at that time, he/she is not entitled to reinstatement, provided the District has no continuing obligations under a collective bargaining agreement or otherwise. (29 CFR 825.216)

During the period when an employee is on family care and medical leave, he/she shall maintain his/her status with the District and the leave shall not constitute a break in service for purposes of longevity, seniority or any employee benefit plan.

The District shall continue to provide an eligible employee on family care and medical leave, the group health plan coverage that was in place before he/she took the leave. If the employee fails to return to District employment after the expiration of the leave, for any reason other than the continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition, or other circumstances beyond his/her control, he/she shall reimburse the District for premiums paid during the family care and medical leave.

Terms of Leave

This 12-month period shall coincide with the fiscal year. (29 CFR 825.200)

Leave taken pursuant to the California Family Rights Act shall run concurrently with leave taken pursuant to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), except for any leave taken under the FMLA for disability on account of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. In addition to family care and medical leave, an employee may be entitled to take pregnancy disability leave of up to four months. During the otherwise unpaid portion of pregnancy disability leave, the employee may use any accrued vacation, sick time or other paid leave. (Government Code 12945, 12945.2)

Leave taken for the birth or placement of a child must be concluded within the 12-month period beginning on the date of the birth or placement of the child. Such leave does not have to be taken in one continuous period of time. The basic minimum duration of the

leave shall be two weeks. However, the District shall grant a request for leave of less than two weeks' duration on any two occasions. (29 USC 2612; 2 CCR 7297.3)

If both parents of a child work for the District, their family care and medical leave related to the birth or placement of the child shall be limited to a total of 12 weeks. (Government Code 12945.2; 29 USC 2612)

During the period of family care and medical leave, the employee may elect to use his/her accrued vacation leave, other accrued time off, or any other paid or unpaid time off negotiated with the District. Accrued sick leave may be used when the purpose of the family care and medical leave is one for which sick leave may be taken pursuant to collective bargaining agreements and/or Board policy. (Government Code 12945.2)

Intermittent Leave/Reduced Leave Schedule

Leave related to the serious health condition of the employee or his/her child, parent or spouse may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. In such a case, the District may require the employee to transfer temporarily to a different position for which he/she is qualified, with equivalent pay and benefits, and that could better accommodate recurring periods of leave. Transfer to an alternative position may include altering an existing job to better accommodate the employee's need for intermittent leave or a reduced leave schedule. (2 CCR 7297.3)

Where the employee involved is an instructional employee and would be on leave for greater than 20 percent of the total number of working days in the leave period, the employee shall have the option of temporarily transferring to an available alternative position or taking leave for periods of a particular duration, not to exceed duration of the planned medical treatment. (29 USC 2618)

Instructional Employees: Leaves Near the End of the Term

The District may require an instructional employee to continue taking a requested leave until the end of the term in any of the following situations: (29 USC 2618)

1. If the instructional employee begins a leave of three or more weeks duration more than five weeks before the end of a term and would subsequently return to work during the last three weeks of the term;
2. If the instructional employee, for reasons other than his/her own serious health condition, begins a leave of more than two weeks duration during the period that begins five weeks before the end of the term and would subsequently return to work during the last two weeks of the term;
3. If the instructional employee, for reasons other than his/her own serious health condition, begins a leave of more than five days duration during the period that begins three weeks before the end of the term.

Request for Family Care and Medical Leave

An employee shall request family care and medical leave in writing, at least 30 days before the commencement date of the leave. If the leave becomes necessary less than 30 days before its commencement, the employee shall provide such notice as soon as practicable. (29 USC 2612; Government Code 12945.2)

In every case in which the necessity for the leave is foreseeable based on planned medical treatment or supervision, the employee shall make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment or supervision to avoid disruption of District operations. This scheduling shall be subject to the health care provider's approval. (29 USC 2612; Government Code 12945.2)

Certification of Health Condition

A request by an employee for family care and medical leave for his/her serious health condition, or to care for a child, parent or spouse with a serious health condition, shall be supported by a certification from the health care provider of the employee or such other person as applicable. The certification shall include the following: (29 USC 2613; Government Code 12945.2; 2 CCR 7297.0)

1. The date on which the serious health condition began;
2. The probable duration of the condition;
3. If the employee is requesting leave to care for a child, parent or spouse with a serious health condition, the health care provider's certification of both of the following:
 - a. Estimated amount of time the health care provider believes the employee needs to care for the child, parent or spouse
 - b. Statement that the serious health condition warrants the participation of a family member to provide care during a period of the treatment or supervision of the child, parent or spouse
4. If the employee is requesting leave because of his/her own serious health condition, the health care provider's certification that due to the serious health condition, the employee is unable to perform the functions of his/her job;
5. If the employee is requesting leave for intermittent treatment or is requesting leave on a reduced leave schedule for planned medical treatment, the certification must also state the medical necessity for the leave, the dates on which treatment is expected to be given, the duration of such treatment, and the expected duration of the leave.

If the District doubts the validity of a certification that accompanies a request for leave, the District may require the employee to obtain a second opinion from a District-

approved health care provider, at District expense. If the second opinion is contrary to the first, the District may require the employee to obtain a third medical opinion from a third health care provider approved by both the employee and the District, again at District expense. (29 USC 2613; Government Code 12945.2)

If additional leave is needed when the time estimated by the health care provider expires, the District may require the employee to provide re-certification in the manner specified in the preceding paragraph. (29 USC 2613; Government Code 12945.2)

Employees who take family care and medical leave for their own serious health conditions shall present certification from their health care provider to the effect that they are able to resume work.

Notifications

The Superintendent or designee shall post separate notices about federal and state law related to family care and medical leave in a conspicuous place. Information about employee rights and obligations related to such leaves shall also be included in employee handbooks. (29 USC 2619; 2 CCR 7297.9)

At least the first time in each six-month period that an employee requests family care and medical leave, the Superintendent or designee shall provide written notice detailing specific expectations and obligations, and explaining any consequences of a failure to meet these obligations. The notice shall include: (29 CFR 825.301)

1. A statement that the leave will be counted against the employee's annual family care and medical leave entitlement;
2. Requirements for the employee to furnish medical certification of a serious health condition;
3. The employee's right to substitute paid leave, conditions related to any substitution, and whether the District requires this substitution;
4. Health benefit arrangements;
5. If applicable, the employee's status as a "key employee" and information related to restoration of that status;
6. The employee's right to restoration to the same or an equivalent job;
7. The employee's potential liability for health benefits should the employee not return to service;
8. The District's requirement that the employee, upon return, present medical certification to the effect that he/she is able to resume work.

Records

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain records pertaining to individual employees' use of family care and medical leave.