PAID FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE

Employer Impact FAQ

Q. What is Paid Family and Medical Leave?

A. *Paid Family and Medical Leave is a Washington State program that was passed by the Legislature in 2017. It offers Washington workers the opportunity to receive partial wage replacement while on leave to recover from an illness or injury, bond with a new child, for certain military connected events, or to take care of a sick or injured family member.*

Q. When does Paid Family and Medical Leave go into effect?

A. *Premium collection will begin January 1, 2019. Eligible employees will be able to apply for benefits beginning January 1, 2020.*

Q. What premium responsibilities do I have as an employer?

A. *A total premium of 0.4 percent up to the social security cap is assessed for each employee. Generally speaking, the employer is responsible for approximately 37 percent of that premium. So if an employee makes $50,000 annually, the total annual assessment would be $200, of which $126.67 would be paid for by the employee, and $73.33 would be paid for by the employer. Employers will be responsible for remitting all premiums collected for Paid Family and Medical Leave to the state. Employers are also required to report hours and wages.*

Q. Which employees are eligible for benefits?

A. *An employee becomes eligible for Paid Family and Medical Leave benefits once they have completed 820 hours of work for any employer/s in Washington State in the qualifying period.*

Q. What is the qualifying period?

A. *The qualifying period is the first four of the last five full calendar quarters, or the last four full calendar quarters. Either period may be used to establish eligibility. The chart below illustrates how this works.*

Qualifying Period					
4th Q/2020 (Oct.-Dec.)	*1st Q/2021 (Jan.-Mar.)*	*2nd Q/2021 (Apr.-Jun.)*	*3rd Q/2021 (Jul.-Sept.)*	*4th Q/2021 (Oct.-Dec.)*	*1st Q/2022 (Jan.-Mar.)*
X	X X	X X	X X	X	820 820

Q. What benefits are eligible employees entitled to?

A. *Eligible employees are entitled to 12 weeks of paid family leave, 12 weeks of paid medical leave, or a combination of the two up to 16 weeks with partial wage replacement that the state will administer. In certain extreme circumstances, employees are eligible for an additional two weeks of leave.*

Q. What is the difference between family leave and medical leave?

A. *Family leave covers bonding time for the birth or placement of a child, time taken to care for an injured or ill family member, or certain military connected events, like time to prepare for the short-notice military deployment of a family member. Medical leave covers time taken to care for an employee's own injury or illness.*

Q. What if I am a small business (fewer than 50 employees)?

A. *As a small business, you are not subject to the job protection requirements pertaining to leave taken under Paid Family and Medical Leave. You are also exempt from the employer portion of the total premium. However, you are still responsible for collecting the employee share of the total premium and remitting that amount to the state. You are also required to report hours and wages. Your employees will be eligible for payments if they take leave that is covered by Paid Family and Medical Leave that would otherwise have been unpaid.*

Q. Am I allowed to cover some or all of the employee portion of the total premium?

A. *As a benefit to employees, employers are permitted to cover some or all of the employee share of the total premium. This is not categorized as a voluntary plan and does not require approval by the state. The employer would simply reduce the premium amount deducted from employee paychecks, cover the difference, and then remit the full amount to the state. If you opt to do this, you may become eligible for grants of up to $3000 per employee up to 10 times per year to help cover wage-related expenses or hiring a temporary replacement.*

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