

New program starts Jan. 1



About this message: In 2017, Washington's Legislature passed a paid family and medical leave law. Starting in 2020, Washington will be the fifth state in the nation to offer paid family and medical leave benefits to workers. A premium of employee gross wages will fund the program, with the cost shared by both employees and many employers. The [Employment Security Department](#) (ESD) administers the program.

This is the first email in a five-part series designed to help employers prepare for the legal requirements that kick in on Jan. 1, 2019. For more information now, visit www.paidleave.wa.gov/employers.

Be there for care

Many important things in life happen outside the workday. People we care about become ill. Families welcome new members. Big moments that require extra attention come along for all of us.

Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave program is an essential benefit that will ensure every eligible employee can take paid time for care when they need it most. Starting in 2020, eligible employees may take up to 12 weeks:

- To care for themselves through serious illness or injury
- To care for a loved one who is seriously ill or injured
- To bond with a child coming into the family through birth, adoption or foster placement
- For certain [military-connected events](#)

Starting Jan. 1, 2019, employers of all sizes must either start withholding premiums from employee paychecks or opt to cover their employees' premiums themselves.

Employers that average fewer than 50 employees do not have to pay the employer portion of the premium but must still withhold the employee portion or cover it themselves and meet all reporting requirements.

Employers who choose to withhold premiums from their employees may withhold up to about 63.333% of the total premium. The employer is responsible for paying the other 36.667%.

For more information on calculating premiums, download our [Employer Toolkit](#) and go to www.paidleave.wa.gov/premium-calculator.

Small businesses

Unlike the federal unpaid Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), businesses of all sizes must participate in the Paid Family and Medical Leave program. **Employers that average under 50 employees do not have to pay the employer portion of the premium** but must still withhold the employee portion or cover it themselves and meet all reporting requirements.

If you are a public or private employer with even one employee in Washington, you'll very likely be a part of Paid Family and Medical Leave.

Employers that average fewer than 50 employees and choose to pay the employer share of the premium may be eligible for [cash assistance grants](#) when an employee goes on Paid Family and Medical Leave starting in 2020.

Can I opt out?

Starting Jan. 1, 2020, all eligible employees in Washington must have access to paid family and medical leave benefits either through the state program or an employer-funded program, called a voluntary plan. The benefits offered to employees under a voluntary plan must meet or exceed the benefits of the state plan. Voluntary plans must be approved by ESD and employers still need to meet the program's reporting requirements. [Download our Voluntary Plan Guide](#) for more information. If you think you may be interested in a voluntary plan, apply as soon as possible.

Your voluntary plan must be approved by ESD to avoid withholding requirements starting Jan. 1, 2019.

Who is not in the program?

- Federally recognized tribes (may opt in)
- Federal employees
- Self-employed individuals (may opt in)
- Some employees subject to [collective bargaining agreements](#)

There's still time to prepare

There is still plenty of time to get ready for Jan. 1, and we're here to help. This email series will walk you through preparing for the Paid Family and Medical Leave requirements that kick in on Jan. 1, 2019.

You can also get more information at any time by going to www.paidleave.wa.gov/employers and:

- **Downloading the [Employer Toolkit](#) (the toolkit includes a checklist to get ready for January)**
- **Signing up for [our listserv](#)**
- **Following us on social media ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#))**

This isn't paid sick leave

Paid Family and Medical Leave is not the same as paid sick leave. Paid Family and Medical Leave was passed by the Legislature in 2017, is administered by the Employment Security Department and is reserved for serious illness or injuries, caring for ill or injured family members, for certain military-connected events and for parental leave. Paid sick leave was passed by voter initiative and is administered by the Department of Labor & Industries.

For more information about paid sick leave, head over to [L&I's website](#).

Tome tiempo

El 1 de enero, las empresas de todos los tamaños empezarán a deducir primas para el programa "Paid Family & Medical Leave" (Permiso de cuidado pagado). Este programa estatal de seguro ofrecerá a todos los empleados que cumplan con los requisitos hasta 12 semanas de permiso pagado, que se podrán tomar a partir del 2020. Es muy fácil empezar y hay ayudas económicas especiales para negocios pequeños.

Para más información visite tometiempo.org.

Questions?

More information at paidleave.wa.gov or email paidleave@esd.wa.gov

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