



Employment Security Department
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Employment Security Department
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Paid Family and Medical Leave is almost here – get ready now

OLYMPIA - With the new year just three weeks away, Washingtonians will soon have access to the most generous Paid Family and Medical Leave program in the U.S. Starting in January, nearly all workers in this state, including part- and full-time, may be eligible to take up to 12 weeks to care for themselves or a family member through a serious illness or injury, to bond with a new child coming into the home and for certain service-connected events for military families. In some circumstances, between 16 and 18 weeks may be available..

“Whether it is unexpected or expected, we all have times in our lives where we need to give or receive care,” said Employment Security Department Commissioner Suzi LeVine. “And when we do need time away from work, maybe to get surgery, care for a parent with Alzheimer’s or bond with a new little one, this program will make sure Washingtonians don’t have to choose between a paycheck and caring for themselves and their families.”

To be eligible, an employee must work 820 hours in Washington, approximately 16 hours per week, over the course of about a year and experience a qualifying event. Hours are accumulated from all employers for which an employee works, including multiple employers at once and seasonal or temporary work. Qualifying events include the birth, placement or adoption of a child, a worker’s own serious health condition or the need to care for a family member who has a serious health condition. For an application to be approved in the event of a serious health condition, medical certification by a healthcare provider will be required.

Unlike the unpaid federal program, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the state Paid Family and Medical Leave program offers partial wage replacement and applies to workers in businesses of all sizes. Wage replacement is based on income and can cover up to 90 percent of a worker’s typical wage. Job protection is available if a worker is employed at a business of over 50 employees, they have worked there for at least a year and for a minimum of 1,250 hours.

Applications for leave can be filed with Employment Security starting Jan. 2, 2020, with benefits payable from January 1. Events that took place in 2019 may still be covered, including the birth or placement of a child.

For anyone planning to take leave early next year, here are three actions to take now:

1. Go to paidleave.wa.gov/2019 and assess your eligibility for the program using the downloadable eligibility questionnaire.
2. Notify your employer in writing at least 30 days before you plan to start leave. A sample notification can be found [on our website](#).
3. Get your documents ready. This includes proof of ID documents to upload with your application, and a medical certification form in some cases.

“We are really excited to be launching this great new program for our state,” LeVine said. “I encourage both workers and employers to go to our website for more information and get ready now.”

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