

Rhode Island Parental & Family Medical Leave Act

This notice is to provide you with information on the Rhode Island Parental & Family Medical Leave Act, which requires that employers of 50 or more employees grant an unpaid leave of absence, upon the request of an eligible employee, for 13 consecutive weeks in any two calendar years, under certain conditions.

Employees Eligible

Employees are eligible to apply for leave if they are full-time employees who work an average of 30 hours a week or more and have been employed continuously for at least 12 months.

Purpose of Leave

The leave required to be provided under the Act must be for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Birth of a child of an employee.
2. Placement of a child 16 years of age or less with an employee in connection with the adoption of such child by the employees.
3. "Serious illness" of the employee or the employee's parent, spouse, child, mother-in-law, or father-in-law. (Serious Illness is defined to mean a disabling physical or mental illness, injury, impairment or condition that involves in-patient care in a hospital, nursing home, or hospice, or out-patient care requiring continuing treatment or supervision by a health care provider).

Requests for Leave

In order to be entitled to the leave, the employee must give at least 30 days notice of the intended date upon which the requested leave is to commence and terminate, unless prevented by medical emergency from doing so. Employees may be requested to provide written certification from a physician caring for the person who is the reason for the leave request, which certification shall specify the probable duration of the requested leave.

School Involvement Leave

An employee who has been employed for 12 consecutive months is entitled to 10 hours of leave during any 12 month period to attend school conferences or other school-related activities for a child of whom the employee is the parent, foster parent, or guardian. A notice of 24 hours prior to the leave must be given to the employer by the employee. The leave is not required to be paid; except an employee may substitute any accrued paid vacation leave or other appropriate paid leave.

Use of Sick Leave by Adoptive Parent

Any employer who allows sick time or sick leave of an employee to be used after the birth of a child shall allow the same time to be used for the placement of a child 16 years of age or less with an employee in connection with the adoption of the child by the employee.

Continuation of Health Benefits

Prior to the commencement of leave, the employee must pay his employer a sum equal to the premium required to maintain the employee's health benefits in force during the period of leave, which sum is required to be returned to the employee within 10 days following return to work.

Return From Leave

Employees who are granted leave under the Act are entitled to be restored to the position held when the leave commenced, or to a position with equivalent seniority, status, employment benefits, pay and other terms and conditions of employment, including all fringe benefits and service credits that the employee had been entitled to at the commencement of the leave.

Prohibited Acts

The Act makes it unlawful for any employer to interfere with, restrain, or deny employees the rights provided under the Act. Any discrimination or disciplinary action taken against an employee for exercising his rights under the Act, or for opposing any practice made unlawful by the Act, is also prohibited.

Enforcement

Alleged violations of the Act may be complained of (1) in a civil action brought by an employee, (2) by a complaint filed with the Director of Labor and Training of the State of Rhode Island. Civil penalties are provided for violations of the Act or any order issued by the Director of Labor and Training.