

Washington Paid Family and Medical Leave

Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) is a new benefit for Washington workers for when a serious health condition prevents someone from going to work or when a worker needs time to care for a family member, bond with a new child, or spend time with a family member preparing for military service overseas.

If a worker is ill with COVID-19, she may be eligible for PFML. A healthcare provider must certify that the worker is unable to work due to a serious health condition. Quarantine, as well as school closures and childcare closures, are not qualifying events under PFML at this time.

If a healthcare provider certifies that the illness meets the definition of “serious health condition” and the worker has the qualifying hours, PFML can be used for COVID-19 cases. To qualify for PFML, an employee must have worked a minimum of 820 hours (about 16 hours per week) in Washington during the previous year. Employers should be aware that these hours can be obtained at one job or combined from working multiple jobs during the qualifying period.

It is also important to note that employees that are ill with COVID-19 have access to employer-provided paid sick leave. Washington law requires employers to provide employees with the ability to accrue at least one hour of paid sick leave for every forty hours worked. This benefit is in addition to and separate from PFML, and employers must still comply with the paid sick leave law.

Finally, a worker cannot collect both unemployment benefits and PFML at the same time. If a worker loses her job due to COVID-19, PFML and/or unemployment insurance may be available, but they are different programs with separate eligibility requirements. For more information on COVID-19 scenarios and benefits available, see the chart linked [here](#).