

FAQ for COVID-19 Absences at PN-GISD



As always, PN-GISD staff safety and health is a top priority. This document provides employees an overview of their leave options should COVID-19 impact the employee or the employee's family. Please contact the District's Employee Benefits Specialist, Tracy Reinholt, at 409-722-4244 with any specific questions. This documents also provides a list of additional frequently asked questions.

New Leave Provisions

On March 18, 2020, President Trump signed into law the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFRCA). It became effective April 1, 2020 and created two key provisions: expansion of employee coverage under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (the FMLA) and creation of emergency paid sick leave for employees due to COVID-19-related reasons. The Act and attendant leave programs expire December 31, 2020.

Employee Paid Sick Leave (EPSL)

Employee Paid Sick Leave provides employees up to two weeks of pay (80 hours, or a part-time employee's two-week equivalent) for qualifying reasons related to COVID-19. EPSL will not exceed a daily rate of \$511. Leave related to the care of another is paid at 2/3 rate of pay capped at \$200/day. All current employees are eligible. Note, employees that are able to work or telework are not eligible for EPSL.

Expanded Family Medical Leave (EFML)

After 30 days of employment, employees are eligible for Expanded Family Medical Leave (EFML), which provides for up to 12 weeks of leave due to COVID-19 related school or child care closures. The first two weeks of EFML is unpaid, and the remaining 10 weeks are payable at 2/3 of the employee's daily rate of pay not to exceed \$200 per day. Employees may choose to substitute the remaining 1/3rd of their pay with time from their available paid leave so that they receive 100% of their regular pay. If an employee is eligible for EPSL, the employee may elect for EPSL to run concurrent with EFML in order to receive compensation during the first two weeks of leave. Note, employees that are able to work or telework are not eligible for EFML.

Standard Leave Provisions

In addition to the new leave provisions created by the FFCRA, PN-GISD continues to provide standard Family Medical Leave, Temporary Disability Leave, Family Illness Leave, and State and Local Leave.

Family Medical Leave

Employees that worked 1,250 hours in the past 12 months are eligible for Family Medical Leave (FMLA). FMLA provides employees with 12 weeks of unpaid leave should the employee have a serious health condition or be required to care for a serious health condition. Note, employees are not eligible for 12 weeks of EFML and 12 weeks of FMLA, but may use a combination of the two types of leave for a total of 12 weeks.

Temporary Disability Leave

Full-time employees whose positions require SBEC certification are eligible for Temporary Disability Leave (TDL). TDL provides 180 days of unpaid leave due to an employee's temporary mental or physical disability that prevents them from being able to work. The days must be used concurrently and are not eligible for intermittent use. While on TDL the employee is responsible for both the employer and employee portions of health insurance. TDL runs concurrently with FMLA.

Family Illness Leave

Once an employee has used a minimum of 11 state and local leave days during a school year, the employee is eligible to apply for Family Illness Leave (FIL) in order to care for an immediate family member. FIL provides an employee with five days of additional paid leave. FIL is subject to approval by the Superintendent.

State and Local Leave

Every year, all employees who work four or more hours each day are provided 6 days of Local leave every year by the district. The State provides an additional five days. All unused time accumulates in an employee's "bank" from year to year. State personal and local leave use is subject to compliance with Board Policy DEC (Local). Discretionary use of personal leave shall not exceed three consecutive workdays. State and local leave is required to run concurrently with TDL and FMLA.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question ***What if I am ill with COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19?***

Answer Complete PN-GISD's Leave Request Form at pngisd.org under Coronavirus/COVID-19 Info, along with all supporting medical documentation, and submit to Tracy Reinholt at treinholt@pngisd.org. District will determine your eligibility for EPSL and what additional leave and pay might be available.

Question ***What if one of my dependents is ill with COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19?***

Answer Complete PN-GISD's Leave Request Form at pngisd.org under Coronavirus/COVID-19 Info , along with all supporting medical documentation, and submit to Tracy Reinholt at treinholt@pngisd.org. District will determine your eligibility for EPSL and what additional leave and pay might be applicable.

Question *What if I learn someone on my campus has been diagnosed with COVID-19, and I suspect it might be one of my students, or a coworker?*

Answer Unless you are formally notified by your campus of a COVID-19 lab confirmed case then you are presumed healthy and are expected to continue performing daily self-screening protocols and report for work.

You will be notified if one of your students or a coworker has a lab confirmed COVID-19 case. Further, if you came into close contact with this individual, as determined by the Health Department, you are presumed infectious and must submit to PN-GISD's reentry guidelines. If notified and close contact existed, please submit a completed Leave Request Form at pngisd.org under Coronavirus/COVID-19 Info along with supporting medical documentation to treinholt@pngisd.org

Question *What if I thought I had COVID-19 and stayed home for work, but I never sought lab confirmation or medical guidance?*

Answer In order to be eligible for EPSL, one of the following must be applicable:

- 1) Subject to federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order (e.g. local health department ordered quarantine due to close contact with a confirmed diagnosis)
- 2) Health care provider advised to self-quarantine
- 3) Exhibiting symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis
- 4) Caring for an individual who is subject to a quarantine or isolation order or has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine
- 5) Caring for a son or daughter because the child's school or place of care has been closed or the child's childcare is unavailable due to COVID-19 precautions

In this scenario, the employee was not being treated for COVID-19 nor was the employee subject to a federal, state, or local quarantine order. Individual election to self-isolate without a governmental order or direction from a medical professional or the health department does not qualify for any type of protected leave. In this instance, the employee would only be permitted to use state and local leave in accordance with District policy.

Question *What if I had close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19, and I am off work waiting for the 14-day incubation period to pass?*

Answer If the employee were directed by the health department or a medical professional to self-isolate as a result of close contact, the employee would be eligible for EPSL if ineligible or unable to telework. Without direction from a medical professional or the health department, the employee is not eligible for EPSL.

Question *Am I eligible for up to two weeks of EPSL for each absence experienced for myself and each of my dependents?*

Answer No. Employees are only eligible for up to 80 hours (or a part-time employee's two-week equivalent) of EPSL. Once two weeks of EPSL is exhausted, it is no longer available.

Question *I am fearful that I might get COVID-19, or infect a family member, and do not wish to come to work. What are my options?*

Answer Employees must submit a completed Leave Request Form at pngisd.org under Coronavirus/COVID-19 Info along with supporting medical documentation to treinholt@pngisd.org in order for their circumstances to be reviewed for eligibility.

Question *What pay is available if I cannot work because I am required to care for a dependent child(ren) because their school is closed or child care is not available due to COVID-19?*

Answer Expanded Family and Medical Leave (EFML) provides up to 12 weeks of leave to care for a child when school is closed or child care is unavailable due to COVID-19. The first two weeks of Expanded FML are unpaid, but can be supplemented with EPSL, if the employee is eligible. The remaining 10 weeks of leave are paid at 2/3 the employee's regular daily rate of pay up to \$200 per day. Employees on EFML may elect if they would like to offset the unpaid 1/3 of their salary with available state and local leave so that the employee receives 100% of their regular daily rate of pay. PN-GISD's Leave Request Form at pngisd.org under Coronavirus/COVID-19 Info, along with documentation from the school or child care provider, should be submitted to treinholt@pngisd.org

Question *Am I also eligible for Family Medical Leave?*

Answer Employees eligible for EPSL may also be eligible for FMLA. Should you believe you are eligible, please email treinholt@pngisd.org to obtain FML forms. Upon submission, the District will review to determine your leave entitlement. If you are determined eligible for FML, your designation will run concurrently with all other leave to which you may be entitled.

For additional information please refer to the FFCRA notice posted on the district's website at www.pngisd.org. The district's Leave Request Form is located at pngisd.org under Coronavirus/COVID-19 Info . If you have any other questions or concerns, you are also encouraged to contact Tracy Reinholt in PN-GISD's Benefits Department at 409-722-4244 x1703 or by email at treinholt@pngisd.org or by fax at 409-729-4817.

ADDITIONAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question ***I have personal medical conditions that causes me concern. What should I do?***

Answer Consult with your medical care professional. Explain your position at work/school and ask for guidance on how to best protect yourself. Also, visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/> for additional information.

Question ***How do I protect myself while at work so that I can adequately care for the relatives I care for?***

Answer Consult with your and/or your family member's medical professional(s). Explain your position at work/school and ask for additional guidance on how to best protect yourself and others. Also, visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/> for additional information.

Question ***Will hand sanitizer be provided for my classroom?***

Answer Hand sanitizer will be provided in many locations, including classrooms, in PNGISD schools. If you have specific needs, share those with your campus principal.

Question ***What supplies are being provided by TEA?***

Answer TEA is providing PNGISD with PPE supplies including masks, sanitizer, and thermometers. These supplies will be distributed to each campus so that the needs of each classroom can be addressed between class periods.

Question ***Will students be held responsible for absences for exemption purposes, etc?***

Answer No, absences will not count against students for exemptions or extra-curricular activities this school year.