

COVID turned all of our lives upside down. And with school starting up again, parents and teachers need to know how to protect their children and themselves - both from COVID and from losing their jobs and income.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) took effect on April 1, 2020, and was extended to March 31, 2021. Currently all emergency paid sick days and paid leave under the plan became voluntary. Employers can decide whether or not to provide the leave. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) reimburses certain employers who voluntarily provide emergency paid sick days and emergency paid leave under the law from April 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021. [This information regarding emergency paid sick days and paid leave only apply to employers who voluntarily comply.](#)

Some cities and states have additional paid sick days and paid family and medical leave laws - you can learn about these laws [on our website](#). [Teachers can learn more about their rights here.](#)

We know not every worker is covered by these programs. They should be. Please contact [Family Values @ Work](#) to learn more about these programs and how you can advocate for all workers and to share your story.

Here's what you need to know about federal emergency sick days and paid leave

You qualify if your workplace remains open, you can't telework, and you work for:

- A government or public employer who chooses to participate
- A private employer with under 500 employees who chooses to participate
- If you are a gig employee, contract worker, or are self-employed, you can apply for refundable tax credits to reimburse yourself for missed wages

You can take federal paid sick days (up to 80 hours over two weeks) if your employer participates and:

- You think you have COVID and you need to get tested or seen by a doctor.
- A health care provider told you to self-quarantine because you have COVID, have symptoms, or are especially vulnerable to COVID.
- You are under a federal, state, or local quarantine or isolation order.
- You are complying with recommendations from a public health official.
- You need to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine or recover from side effects (starting April 1, 2021).
- You are caring for an individual who is self-isolating because they have COVID, have symptoms, or are especially vulnerable to COVID.
- You are caring for your child if their school or place of care is closed, or if the person who usually takes care of your child is not available because of COVID.

Beginning April 1, 2021, you can receive an additional 12 weeks of emergency paid leave for any of the same reasons as emergency paid sick days (for a total of 14 weeks including paid sick days) as long as your employer participates in the program.

When using time to care for themselves using emergency paid sick days, workers receive full pay, up to \$511 per day or \$5,111 total. Workers caring for loved ones, children out of school, or using paid leave earn 2/3rds of their pay, up to \$200 per day.

FAQs for workers who qualify for leave and have employers who voluntarily provide it

I used all of the federal leave already. What can I do?

On April 1, 2021, workers who qualify for the leave receive a new bank of time to use until September 30, 2021. If your employer chooses to participate, you will have up to 14 weeks of additional time between emergency paid sick days and emergency paid leave.

If you run out of time under federal programs and still need help, we have several recommendations:

- Visit familyvaluesatwork.org/rights to see if there are any state or local laws that you could use to get additional time from work.
- Talk to your employer about potential accommodations. For instance, there may be a way to work from home that you can try, or perhaps you can shift your work hours to better meet your needs.
- If other options are not available, you can apply with your state for unemployment assistance through the [new coronavirus unemployment laws](#).

What happens if my child has to do remote school but I have to work? Can I use federal paid sick days or emergency paid leave if the school is open but operating virtually?

If your employer chooses to participate in the program and you qualify, you can use the emergency [paid sick days](#) or [emergency paid leave](#) to care for your child when school is closed. According to the [Department of Labor](#), your child's school is considered closed if they must use online instruction or otherwise complete assignments at home.

You can also talk to your employer about accommodations, including changing your schedule to work from home or to work different hours so someone else could care for your children safely.

What do I do if I am supposed to work in person and my child's school has a choice of in-person or remote schooling, but I need to keep them home because they are high-risk or a member of our household is high risk?

If you need to quarantine to protect a child or household member who is at high-risk, you may be eligible for up to 80 hours of federal paid sick time over a 2 week period. You must work for a covered employer or be self-employed, and your employer must choose to use the program.

Emergency paid leave may be available to care for children when their usual school or childcare is closed. If your child's school is in-person, the [school is considered open](#). Beginning April 1, 2021, if you qualify and your employer chooses to participate, you can receive an additional 12 weeks of emergency paid leave for any of the same reasons as emergency paid sick days (for a total of 14 weeks including paid sick days).

You may want to see if [your city or state has additional laws](#) that can help you.

My child has in-person schooling, but I don't feel comfortable sending them (even though no one has been told to quarantine or is at high risk). Can I use federal emergency time to care for them at home?

Unfortunately, time is only available in this situation when a child's school is closed or someone has been told to quarantine or is high-risk. Since your child's school is in-person, the [school is considered open](#). This is true if the school offers all education onsite or if you have a choice between virtual and in-person. See below if your school is only open in-person part of the time.

My child only needs to be supervised part of the day (for instance, another adult is available sometimes, or my child's school is in-person some days). Do I need to take paid sick days or emergency paid leave all at once, or can I use it in smaller pieces?

If you are using federal paid sick days or emergency paid leave to take care of children because school is closed, you [can use it intermittently](#) for up to 12 weeks (14 weeks beginning April 1, 2021) total with employer permission. You can use the time when school is closed and when there is no other suitable adult to care for your children. You must work for a covered employer or be self-employed, and your employer must choose to use the program.

I'm having trouble finding or affording childcare. I can't use federal paid time.

If you do not qualify for federal paid time, or if it is not an option for other reasons, you may want to look at [childcare.gov](#) for specific COVID advice or [to find childcare](#). Be sure to check whether your state has any local or state laws or funds that can help.

My child is in daycare/school. What happens if that place of care has to close because a student or teacher tests positive?

If you work for a covered employer or are self-employed, and your employer chooses to use the program, you can use federal paid sick days or emergency paid leave until the place of care reopens.