

## Back to School for Teachers and Education Workers

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*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](#). [Parents can learn more about their rights here](#). If you are part of a union, you should also contact your representative to see what is covered in your contract.*

*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
  - Employees of a publicly funded school/college are considered government employees.
- A private employer with under 500 employees who chooses to participate, including private schools and part-time work
- If you are a gig employee, contract worker, or are self-employed, you can apply for refundable tax credits to reimburse yourself for missed wage

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

### **If a student in my class gets COVID-19 and I have to isolate, what should I do? What happens if I've burned through all of my emergency paid sick days but still have to isolate?**

If you work for a covered employer who chooses to participate, you should be covered by emergency paid sick days for up to 80 hours of paid sick time over 2 weeks. If you receive a negative COVID test before the two weeks are up, you can return to work and stop the clock on your time.

Beginning April 1, 2021, workers get a new bank of emergency paid sick days and emergency paid leave (up to 14 total weeks). Once you use all emergency paid sick days, you can use emergency paid leave for the same reasons as the sick days.

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

[The CDC recommends that schools make it easy for staff to stay home if they are showing symptoms or came into close contact with someone who shows symptoms.](#)

### **If I have to self isolate, am I required to teach online?**

You and your employer can determine how best to handle this situation. Federal emergency paid sick days are not available to employees who are able to telework. However, if telework is not an option and your employer agrees to participate in the program, paid sick days should be available.

Being able to telework goes beyond whether or not your work can be done at home. If you are too ill to work, if you are [caring for others](#), or if you have other restrictions that prevent teleworking, you should be able to use this time as long as you work for a covered employer who chooses to participate.

### **I'm expected to report for school in person. But my child has to attend school remotely at least some of the time. What can I do?**

If you work for a covered employer who chooses to participate, one option is to use emergency [paid sick days](#) or [emergency paid leave](#) to care for your child on days they report remotely. According to the [Department of Labor](#), your child's school is considered closed if they must use online instruction or any model where they complete assignments at home.

You can also talk to your employer about potential accommodations, including working from home.

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.

### **If I work at a small private school, can I get federal paid sick days and/or emergency paid leave?**

As long as you work for a qualifying employer who chooses to participate (see above), you should be able to qualify for COVID related purposes.