



# Parents' Guide

to Paid Family and Medical Leave

Paid time off when you need it most.

## What you need to know

### Am I eligible?

Paid Family and Medical Leave is available to almost everyone working in Washington. You can receive the benefit when you have:

1. Worked 820 hours (about 16 hours a week) in employment in Washington during the "[qualifying period](#)."
2. Experienced a "[qualifying event](#)."

Full-time, part-time, temporary and seasonal work counts. The benefit is also portable between jobs, so if you work more than one job or switch employers all the reportable hours you work in Washington count toward eligibility.

### How much time do I get?

- All parents can receive up to 12 weeks of family leave for bonding in the first year after your child's birth or placement.
- If you give birth, you can be eligible for up to 16 weeks of combined medical and family leave. This requires two applications. Any medical leave designated as the "postnatal period" is included in the total amount of leave available to you
- If you experience a condition in pregnancy that results in incapacity, like being put on bed rest or experiencing postpartum depression, you may be eligible for an additional two weeks of medical leave. This would give you up to 18 weeks of combined medical and family leave if you submit both applications. Any medical leave designated as the "postnatal period" is included in the total amount of leave available to you.

### What benefit do I receive?

You may receive up to 90 percent of your average weekly wage, depending on your income. The amount is capped at \$1,427 per week for 2023. A benefit estimator is available at [paidleave.wa.gov/estimate-your-weekly-pay](https://paidleave.wa.gov/estimate-your-weekly-pay).

### How do I apply?

You can apply online ([paidleave.wa.gov/apply-now](https://paidleave.wa.gov/apply-now)) or with a paper application.

### When should I apply?

Submit your application within 30 days after your [qualifying event](#) has taken place, for example, after you've given birth.

- You can complete most of the application process ahead of time. This includes creating an online account, getting your documentation ready and your medical certification signed, and filling in most of the application.
- You'll need to notify your employer at least 30 days in advance if you know about the need that far ahead of time. If a birth came early or you developed a pregnancy complication, notify your employer(s) as soon as you are able.
- You will need separate applications for medical leave and family leave events, like if you are taking medical leave to recover from giving birth and then take family leave to bond with your baby. You should apply for medical leave first. You will be able to fill out the second application in your Paid Leave account after you have received a determination on your first application. If you give birth, any leave taken in the "postnatal period" (the first 6 weeks after giving birth) will be designated as medical leave unless you specify otherwise.

### Do I have to use other leave, like vacation or sick time, before I use Paid Family and Medical Leave?

No. Your employer can't make you use paid or unpaid time off before you use Paid Family and Medical Leave. Taking Paid Family and Medical Leave is your choice.

[www.paidleave.wa.gov](https://www.paidleave.wa.gov)

## Qualifying events

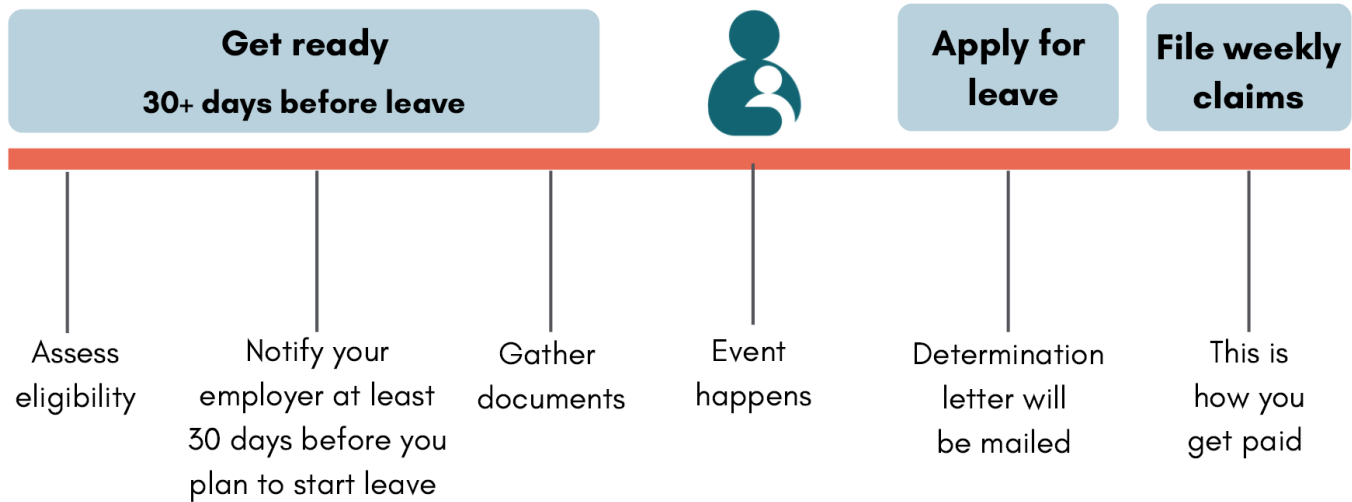
### Family leave

- Bonding with a new child coming into your family through birth, adoption or foster placement.
- Caring for a family member with a serious health condition or injury.
- Certain events for military families.

### Medical leave (for yourself)

- Recovery from your own serious health condition or injury

## Application process



## Get ready to apply

### Assess eligibility.

- Use the questionnaire on page 7.
- Go to our website to take a short quiz ([paidleave.wa.gov/quiz](https://paidleave.wa.gov/quiz)).

**Apply for leave after your child is born or placed.**

**Give written notice to your employer at least 30 days before you plan to start your leave.** If your leave was not foreseeable, provide written notice as soon as you are able. You can give notice in various ways, including text or email. You can also download a template notification at [paidleave.wa.gov/get-ready-to-apply](https://paidleave.wa.gov/get-ready-to-apply). You may also want to keep a copy of the notification you give your employer for your records.

### Get your documents ready

- **Proof of ID**, such as:
  - Driver's license,
  - Passport or
  - Utility and phone bills (a complete list of documents is at [paidleave.wa.gov/get-ready-to-apply](https://paidleave.wa.gov/get-ready-to-apply)).

The documentation or form you'll need depends on the type of leave you're applying for:

- **Medical leave related to pregnancy or childbirth:**
  - Medical certification signed by a healthcare provider:
    - [Certification form](#),
    - FMLA paperwork, or
    - Other documentation that meets the requirements.
  - It may take two weeks or more for your doctor's office to process this paperwork, so send it to them as soon as possible.
  - Note: Leave that a parent who gives birth takes in the "postnatal period" will be designated as medical leave, unless you specify otherwise. If you plan to also use family leave, you will need to submit a second application.

- **Family leave to bond with a child who was born into your family:**
  - Both parents can use our [Certification form \(pregnancy and birth\)](#).
  - If you give birth to a child and apply for medical leave before bonding leave, you can use the [Certification form \(medical leave\)](#) or the [Certification form \(pregnancy and birth\)](#) for both applications if the form reflects your child's actual date of birth (not due date).
- **Family leave to bond with a child who was adopted or placed in your family:**
  - Court documents to show foster care, adoption or guardianship placement, or
  - Other documentation that establishes the child's placement date, like a letter from an assigned social worker or agency.

## Apply for leave

### Create your account(s)

- Go to [paidleave.wa.gov/log-in](https://paidleave.wa.gov/log-in). Click on the "Worker log in" button. This will take you to the state's log-in service, SecureAccess Washington. Use an existing SAW login or create a new one. (Not sure if you have a SAW login? Click the "Get Help" button on the SAW homepage to find out.)
- In SAW you'll add Paid Family and Medical Leave to your services by:
  - Selecting "Browse a list of services"
  - In the list of services find "Employment Security Department" and click it
  - Click the "Apply" button next to Paid Family and Medical Leave
- You will then create a Paid Family and Medical Leave account.

### Fill in the application(s)

- You'll provide basic information and verify your employment history.
- A paper application is available if you do not have a Social Security Number.
- Be sure to upload your proof of ID document(s) and Certification form, if applicable, to complete the application.
- Your employer will also be notified by mail when you apply. They will have 18 days to contest your application if they feel you are not eligible for the program.
- **If you are pregnant and plan to take both medical and family leave,** you will fill out two applications.
  - The first application is for medical leave during the "postnatal period." Upload a [Certification form](#) with your application.
  - Once you receive a determination, you can submit a family leave application for bonding in your same Paid Leave account. You will need to provide a [Certification form \(pregnancy and birth\)](#) or documentation from the hospital that shows your child's date of birth.
- **If you are pregnant and only taking family leave for bonding,** fill out your application for family leave.

### Upload documents

- Proof of identification documents
- [Certification form \(medical leave\)](#) or [Certification form \(family leave\)](#) (if applicable)
- [Certification form \(pregnancy or birth\)](#) (if applicable)

### What is in the application?

- Basic information about yourself (full name, date of birth, address, contact information, Social Security Number. If you do not have a Social Security Number, you may fill out a paper application or call our Customer Care Team for more information).
- Verification of your employment history.
- The date you notified your employer about your leave.
- What type of leave you're taking (family or medical).

### Important tip!

Double-check your name and your SSN before finalizing your account creation.

- Documentation for placement (if applicable)

### Get your determination

- Submit your application and the necessary documents.
- We will review your application and may contact you if we have questions.
- Once we make a decision, we will mail you a determination letter at the mailing address you gave us.
  - This letter will tell you your maximum weekly benefit amount and confirm the dates of your approved leave and claim year.

Can't apply online? You can also apply on paper via postal mail. Request an application from our Customer Care Team.

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## WEEKLY CLAIMS AND PAYMENTS

### Weekly claims

- Weekly claims are how you receive your payments.
- Once we approve your application, you can begin filing weekly claims.
- You can file claims for weeks you were on leave after your [qualifying event](#) occurred but before we approved your application.
- You also may be able to backdate your claim because you were unable to file for Paid Family and Medical Leave right after your event occurred.
- The minimum claim for each week is eight consecutive hours. That's one day for full-time employees but might be more than one day if you work part-time.
- You can file weekly claims in your Paid Leave account or by calling us.
- If you are taking leave intermittently, working or using paid time off instead of taking leave, you must still submit a weekly claim.
  - The first question on the weekly claim is, "Do you want to receive Paid Leave benefits for this week?" If you didn't miss work or don't want to use your benefits for some other reason, select "no." You will not see this question if the weekly claim may be for your waiting week.
- On the questionnaire, you will answer a series of questions that pertain to your type of leave. You may answer different questions from one week to the next.
- The status of your weekly claims and your weekly claim history is available in your benefit account.
- You cannot collect Unemployment Insurance or workers' compensation benefits at the same time as Paid Family and Medical Leave.

**Providing complete and accurate information will help us process your application and weekly claims faster.**

### Payments

- If you use paid time off at the same time as Paid Family and Medical Leave your benefit payment will be affected. However, your employer may choose to offer additional pay to you while you are using Paid Family and Medical Leave – this is called a "[supplemental benefit](#)." Not all paid time off is a supplemental benefit, so you need to check with your employer if this is available to you. It is your employer's choice to offer a supplemental benefit, and your choice to take it if it is available.
  - If you worked or received other benefits, like employer-provided paid time off that is not designated as a supplemental benefit, your payment will be reduced that week.
- If you apply online, you can choose to be paid via direct deposit or a prepaid debit card. If you apply on paper, you can only receive a prepaid debit card at this time.

Visit [paidleave.wa.gov/after-you-apply](https://paidleave.wa.gov/after-you-apply) for more information and tips on what to expect after you apply.

## More to know

**All parents are eligible!** Moms, dads, non-birth parents and guardians are eligible for paid family leave to bond with a child coming into their home through birth, adoption or foster placement within the first year after birth or placement. Each parent is entitled to their 12 weeks of bonding leave, even if they work for the same employer.

**Parents and guardians do not have to take leave at the same time, and leave does not need to be taken all at once.** For example, one parent may want to take four weeks off right after their child is born, and then use the remaining eight weeks after the parent who gave birth returns to work.

**You can take parental leave anytime in the first year after a child's birth, adoption or placement.** Are you a foster or adoptive parent to an older kid? Bonding leave applies to placement or adoption of any children under the age of 18.

**If you are giving birth, you will likely fill out two applications.** The first application is for medical leave during the "[postnatal period](#)" (the first 6 weeks after giving birth) and the second application is for family (bonding) leave. You will be able to fill out the second application in your Paid Leave account after you have received a determination on your first application. You will need to provide proof of birth documentation (such as our [Certification form \(pregnancy or birth\)](#), a copy of your child's birth certificate or documentation from the hospital showing your child's date of birth).

You may use the same certification of birth for both postnatal medical leave and bonding leave. Combining medical and family leave allows you to take up to 16 weeks of leave total.

If you need more than 6 weeks of medical leave following childbirth, for example if you have a C-section or postpartum depression, you will also need medical certification and you may qualify for a total of up to 18 weeks of combined medical and family leave.

**You may be eligible for job protection.** If you work for a company that employs more than 50 people in Washington, you have worked there for at least a year and for a total of 1,250 hours in the past year for that employer (about 24 hours per week), you are likely eligible for job protection.

**It's yours –  
you've earned it.**

**Using this program is your choice.** It is yours – you earned it. While you are welcome to use other leave options you may have before or after you take Paid Family and Medical Leave, your employer cannot require you to use other leave options before Paid Family and Medical Leave.

**Check with your employer if they offer a "supplemental benefit."** You cannot use employer provided paid time off at the same time as Paid Family and Medical Leave, unless your employer offers what is called "a [supplemental benefit](#)." Supplemental benefits are something an employer may choose to offer that can be used along with Paid Family and Medical Leave to provide additional pay while you are receiving the benefit. Ask your employer if this option is available to you.

**This is not the same as paid sick leave.** Paid sick days are for short-term health conditions that keep you from working, typically for less than a week. For more information on paid sick leave, visit [www.lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/leave/paid-sick-leave](http://www.lni.wa.gov/workers-rights/leave/paid-sick-leave)

Find frequently asked questions and more information at [paidleave.wa.gov](http://paidleave.wa.gov) and in our Benefit Guide (<http://www.paidleave.wa.gov/benefit-guide>).  
[www.paidleave.wa.gov](http://www.paidleave.wa.gov)

## Should you apply? Answer these questions

- |    | Yes                      | No                       |   |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you work at least 820 hours (about 16 hours a week) in the last year or before the pandemic began (2019 through early 2020) in Washington state? (The 820 hours can be for one job or multiple jobs)  |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you experienced a “ <a href="#">qualifying event</a> ”? Events include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcoming a new child into your family through birth, adoption or foster placement;</li><li>• Your own serious health condition or illness, like recovering from surgery or a serious injury;</li><li>• Caring for a seriously ill or injured family member;</li><li>• A qualifying military family leave event.</li></ul>   |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | None of these conditions apply to me: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solely employed by the federal government</li><li>• Working for an employer with an approved voluntary plan (if you are unsure, ask your employer)</li><li>• Covered by a collective bargaining agreement that hasn’t expired, been opened or renegotiated since October 19, 2017</li><li>• Self-employed and have not opted in to Paid Family and Medical Leave</li><li>• Solely employed by a federally recognized tribe that has not opted in to Paid Family and Medical Leave</li></ul> |

If you answered “Yes” to each of these, you likely will qualify for the program.

## Definitions

### Qualifying period

Normally, the first four of the last five completed calendar quarters or, if that does not get you to the required 820 hours, the last four completed calendar quarters immediately preceding the application for leave.

### Qualifying event

A qualifying event is a thing that happens for which you need to take leave. Not all illnesses, injuries or situations will qualify you to take Paid Family and Medical Leave.

- The law says, “paid family leave [is] for the birth or placement of a child with the employee, for the care of a family member who has a serious health condition, and for a qualifying exigency under the federal family and medical leave act,” and “paid medical leave [is] for an employee’s own serious health condition.”
- There is more information on page 2 about qualifying events.

### Serious health condition

A definition of a “serious health condition” is provided by law (RCW [50A.05.010](#)), and it is at the discretion of a healthcare provider to make an initial decision about whether your or your family member’s condition meets that definition.

- A serious health condition could include an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; continuing treatment by a health care provider; incapacity due to pregnancy or for prenatal care; incapacity for some chronic serious health conditions, and more.
- Things that would not be included are the common cold, routine dental work, headaches that are not migraines and earaches.
- More information can be found at [paidleave.wa.gov/healthcare-providers](http://paidleave.wa.gov/healthcare-providers).

## Claim year

The claim year begins on the Sunday of the week you submit your initial application. The claim year expires 52 weeks later. Your claim year will start even if your initial application is denied (note: the claim year does not start if your application was denied because you do not have enough worked hours).

- If you submit more than one application (such as medical leave and then family leave after giving birth) your claim year does not restart.
- We have [a quiz on our website](#) to help you figure out if you may be eligible.

## Supplemental benefit

Because Paid Family and Medical Leave is partial wage replacement, your employer may choose to provide additional pay to you while on Paid Family and Medical Leave to supplement the benefit you receive. This is a supplemental benefit.

- This can be provided in any way your employer chooses, including designating certain paid time off as a supplemental benefit. Any supplemental benefit amount can be provided. It is your employer's choice to offer this and your choice to receive it if offered. Paid time off is not automatically a supplemental benefit, so it is important to check with your employer if this is available to you.
- You do not report supplemental benefits on your weekly claim but paid time off that is not considered a supplemental benefit must be reported.

## Change log:

### January 2020

- Updated information about weekly claims (p 6)
- Updated information around January 2020 applications

### March 2020

- Updated information about hardship policy (p 6)

### May 2020

- Updated information about the Certification of Birth form (p 3, 4)

### June 2021

- Updated maximum benefit amount (p 2)
- Removed information about Events in 2019 and Hardships (p 6)

### August 2021

- Added definitions for qualifying period, qualifying event, serious health condition, claim year and supplemental benefit (p 7, 8)

### August 2022

- Updated links to certification forms (p 3, 4, 6)
- Added information about postnatal period (p 2, 3, 4, 6)

### December 2022

- Updated maximum weekly benefit amount (p 2)

### May 2023

- Clarified information about when to submit application (p 2)
- Removed information about COVID-expanded qualifying period (p7)