



As we await further guidance from the Department of Labor on the Emergency Paid Leave Act, we thought it would be helpful to have the FAQs for today focus on the day-to-day management of human resources. We will address the questions we are receiving most frequently, understanding that not all questions will apply to your line of business. As business owners and managers, you are having to make very difficult business and personal decisions during this unprecedented time. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your HR Manager for additional guidance on HR-related matters as you are contemplating next steps.

Q: Currently, I am not able to have my employees working at all. Is laying them off my only option?

A: No, you have other options available to you. One that has become most common in the last week is to “furlough” employees not needed during this short-term situation. This term has usually only applied to the public sector, but it is becoming more commonplace in the private sector as well in recent weeks. Furlough is defined as a mandated suspension of work without pay for a period of less than one year. The advantage of furloughing an employee versus laying them off is both economical and psychological. Furloughed employees are still considered “active” employees. For full-time employees enrolled in benefits, this may allow them to remain on your plans for a period and continue to pay the employee portion of their premium. In addition, it allows you to send the message they are a valued member of your staff that you want to continue to have on your team after this temporary downturn in your business. A furloughed employee can still be eligible for unemployment benefits. You may have additional employer costs if you furlough an employee versus laying them off in terms of still having responsibility of paying their monthly benefit premiums. However, if you are looking at this as a short-term situation and want to keep your team intact, this is a great option. There are various items to consider as you are making your decision, and we strongly encourage you to engage with your HR Manager as you are weighing your options.

Q: If I make a reduction in work hours, are the impacted employees eligible to apply for unemployment for those hours lost?

A: Yes, they can apply for unemployment. Requirements and how to apply vary by state. Some states require that the employer submit the names of affected employee(s) to the unemployment office. While others request that the employee contact their local unemployment office directly to file a claim. Your Human Resources Manager can help you navigate the unemployment application process so that your affected employees feel completely supported no matter what state they live.

Q: Our employees are working from home. What can we do to help stay connected?

A: Maintaining a sense of camaraderie and belonging is vital right now. Here are a few ideas for helping your team feel connected:

- Have daily “check-in meetings” where you bring the team together to see how everyone is doing and provide any updates on the business. Video conferencing is ideal if you can

do it (Zoom is one free option) or by teleconference. If pulling everyone together is not an option, check in with employees individually.

- Do you have a project you have been wanting to complete but haven't had the time? Take advantage of this opportunity to form a team to work on the project.
- Have employees share pictures of their "new normal" with their co-workers by e-mail. They can also share a funny story about life while working from home (they can even use the code name my "co-worker" in the story to refer to roommates, spouses, children, etc.).
- Bring your team together at the end of the workday for a "virtual happy hour" by video conference/teleconference. Drinks can be alcoholic or non-alcoholic – have each team member bring their favorite drink and share with everyone what they have and why they like it.

Please also remember the Employee Assistance Program is available as part of the PEO benefits package for all employees.