



January 19, 2021

## FAQ'S ON EPSL ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

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Since April 1, 2020, the County has provided federally required Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) and Emergency FMLA Leave for absences due to illness, quarantine, or lack of childcare resulting from COVID-19. Under federal law, these COVID-19 related leave benefits expired on December 31, 2020.

While the County is no longer required to provide COVID-19 related leave, County Executive Pittman wants to continue this benefit for our employees who provide valuable services to the citizens of Anne Arundel County every day.

Effective January 1, 2021, the County is providing paid EPSL Administrative Leave for employees in certain COVID-19 related circumstances. Eligible employees will be granted up to 80 hours of paid EPSL Administrative Leave if they or their family member cannot work or telework due to COVID-19 illness or the direction to quarantine from a health care provider. This leave will be available through March 31, 2021, to all employees, including those who used 80 hours of EPSL in 2020.

EPSL Administrative Leave is not available for employees who cannot work or telework because of a lack of childcare due to COVID-19 reasons. Employees will have to use their own accrued Annual or Personal Leave, or accrued comp time, to cover childcare related absences.

Detailed information is included in the FAQ's on EPSL Administrative Leave that follow below.

For questions regarding use of EPSL Administrative Leave or other forms of accrued leave, please contact the Office of Personnel at (410) 222-7595 or via email at [PersonnelAnnouncements@aacounty.org](mailto:PersonnelAnnouncements@aacounty.org).

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### **What is EPSL Administrative Leave and who is eligible?**

All full-time employees are entitled to up to 80 hours of EPSL Administrative Leave that may be used only for reasons related to COVID-19 (described below). You may use EPSL Administrative Leave before using any of your accrued Disability, Annual or Personal leave. Employees who

have already taken EPSL in calendar year 2020 will also be eligible for EPSL Administrative Leave effective January 1, 2021. Employees working in public safety are eligible to use EPSL Administrative Leave.

Part-time employees are entitled to EPSL Administrative Leave based on their average hours scheduled to work during a two-week period.

**When can I use EPSL Administrative Leave?**

EPSL Emergency Leave is available for the following reasons:

- (1) you are subject to a federal, state or local quarantine or isolation order due to COVID-19;
- (2) you have been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine because of COVID-19;
- (3) you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and are seeking medical diagnosis; or
- (4) you are caring for family member who is quarantined or in isolation because of COVID-19.

**Is EPSL Administrative Leave paid at my regular pay rate?**

Yes. Up to 80 hours of leave will be paid at your full pay rate.

**Do I have to use my available Disability or Annual leave first?**

No. You are entitled to take up to 80 hours of EPSL Administrative Leave first before using any accrued Disability or Annual leave that you have available. If you exhaust your EPSL Administrative Leave, you will be required to use your available Disability, Annual or Personal leave or accrued comp time.

**How long will EPSL Administrative Leave be available?**

Employees may take EPSL Administrative Leave to cover any of the COVID-19 related reasons listed above until March 31, 2021.

**How should timekeepers record EPSL Administrative Leave?**

Timekeepers should continue using the pay code “FF Paid Sick” to record EPSL Administrative Leave.

**Can I take EPSL Administrative Leave if I am sick, or caring for a family member who is sick, with something other than COVID-19?**

No. EPSL Administrative Leave is available only for the reasons listed above related to COVID-19. If you or a family member have a different illness or injury that is not related to COVID-19, you will be required to use your available Disability leave to cover any absence from work in accordance with County policies.

**What if I am still sick or caring for a family member with COVID-19 after I use all 80 hours of EPSL Administrative Leave?**

You may use any accrued Disability, Annual, or Personal leave or any accrued comp time once you have exhausted the 80 hours of EPSL Administrative Leave. You will be required to use Disability leave first, followed by other available accrued leave once you have used all of your Disability leave. If you do not have accrued leave, or if you exhaust your accrued paid leave, you may be eligible for up to 15 days of Advanced Disability Leave. You may also qualify for unpaid FMLA leave which would run concurrently with any paid leave.

**Who is considered a “family member” under County leave policies?**

The term “family member” includes: an employee’s child (biological, adopted, foster or stepchild); a parent (biological, adopted, foster or stepparent), legal guardian, or someone who stood in loco parentis of an employee or the employee’s spouse; a grandparent (biological, adopted, foster or step-grandparent) of an employee; a grandchild (biological, adopted, foster or step-grandchild) of an employee; or an employee’s sibling (biological, adopted, foster or step-sibling).

**Will I still have to provide medical documentation before I return to work after being sick or after caring for a family member who was sick?**

Yes. You must provide medical certification that you are able to return to work.

**What should I do if I came in contact with someone infected with COVID-19?**

You should contact your healthcare provider and notify your supervisor before coming into work. The County may require employees who have known exposure to a person who tested positive for COVID-19 to remain out of the workplace typically for 10 days after the date of exposure, in accordance with CDC and County Department of Health guidelines. Depending on your job duties, you may be asked to telework during the period of absence at the discretion of your department head. If you are not able to telework, you may be eligible for EPSL Administrative Leave, followed by any other accrued Disability Leave you have available. If you have no accrued leave available, you may be eligible for up to 15 days of Advanced Disability Leave.

**I have been told to report back to my usual work location, but I am concerned about possible exposure to COVID-19. What should I do?**

The County takes all possible precautions to keep employees safe and healthy at work. Employees who are directed to return to work are expected to do so. If you are concerned about exposure to COVID-19 and do not want to return, you must use your available Annual, Disability or Personal leave, or accrued comp time, to cover your continued absence, which must be approved by their department head in accordance with County policies.

If you have taken a job with an employer other than the County while on Administrative leave and are unable to report to work during your regular work hours when directed to do so, you may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

**What happens if a co-worker in my work location tests positive for COVID-19?**

If the County learns of an employee who tests positive for COVID-19, the department will inform employees in that individual's work unit only that there is a confirmed case but will provide no identifying information for privacy protection. Employees should continue practicing social distancing, frequent hand washing, and wearing a mask while at the workplace.

If employees learn that they have been in contact with someone who was exposed to another person with COVID-19, they are generally not at increased risk for exposure to COVID-19. Unless the employee has symptoms of COVID-19, no work or activity restrictions are necessary. An asymptomatic employee in this case would be required to report to work and would have to obtain department approval to use their own accrued leave if unwilling to return.

**What should I do if I become sick with known COVID-19 symptoms while at work?**

Employees who start to feel ill should contact their immediate supervisor and stay home or go home from work if working onsite. Employees should self-monitor their symptoms and call their health care provider or the Department of Health for guidance.

If directed by a health care provider or Department of Health to self-quarantine and/or to get tested for COVID-19, you may be eligible for EPSL Administrative Leave. If you are tested for COVID-19 and receive a negative test result, you should to return to work only as directed by a health care provider. Employees who remain out of work after they are released to work by their health care provider will have to use their available leave in accordance with County policies.

If an employee reports to work and is sent home by the County because of possible COVID-19 symptoms or exposure, the employee will receive EPSL Administrative Leave that day and will be directed to contact their health care provider or the Department of Health for further guidance.

**Who do I contact with questions?**

For questions about leave, pay, or benefits, contact the Office of Personnel at (410) 222-7595 or via email at [PersonnelAnnouncements@aacounty.org](mailto:PersonnelAnnouncements@aacounty.org).

For questions about teleworking or scheduling, contact your direct supervisor.

**For general questions about COVID-19, please check the Anne Arundel County Department of Health website at [www.aahealth.org](http://www.aahealth.org) or you may call the information line at (410) 222-7256.**