Effective April 1, 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) provides employees with two additional types of leave. First, employees with a qualifying circumstance as defined by the act will be eligible for up to 10 hours paid emergency sick leave, in addition to their sick leave balance. Second, employees who have a minor child whose school or place of care is closed will be eligible for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the majority of which is additional paid leave. These provisions will apply from April 1 through Dec. 31, and in addition to any personal annual and/or sick leave balances that you have.

An employee is entitled to use the additional 10 hours of paid emergency sick leave for absences related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework, because the employee:

1. Is subject to a quarantine or self-quarantine related to COVID-19.
2. Is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis.
3. Is caring for an individual who is subject to a quarantine or self-quarantine related to COVID-19.
4. Is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed, or the childcare provider is unavailable due to COVID-19-related reasons.
5. Is experiencing any other substantially similar conditions specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

With regard to qualifying reason 1, in many cities and states, government authorities have issued a quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19. Some local and state governments have also identified groups of people that should self-quarantine, such as individuals over a certain age. While the USPS is considered a critical service and not subject to state and local dictates, employees that choose to self-quarantine in these circumstances may be eligible to use up to 10 hours of emergency sick leave to cover their absence.

All career and non-career employees, regardless of tenure, are immediately eligible for up to two weeks of fully paid paid emergency sick leave. Full-time career employees can receive up to 10 hours of paid emergency sick leave. Part-time career employees can receive emergency sick leave up to the number of hours equal to their average work hours during a two-week period or the hours they would have worked. Non-career employees can receive emergency sick leave up to the number of hours they would have worked had they not been absent due to the reason listed above.

An employee may take 10 hours of emergency sick leave at a time. This means that if an employee feels ill and uses 10 hours at a single time, the employee would not be eligible to use any emergency sick leave again until the 10th day of another illness.

With regard to the other type of additional leave, the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion, an employee is entitled to take leave related to COVID-19 if the employee is unable to work, including unable to telework, because the employee is caring for his or her child whose school or place of care is closed or the childcare provider is unavailable due to COVID-19 related reasons. This qualifying reason is the same as qualifying reason 1 for emergency leave.

An employee who has been employed for 30 or more days is eligible for this benefit if they meet the qualifying reasons listed above. This new qualifying reason does not add to the 12 weeks of FMLA already provided for in the law. When an employee develops a fever and symptoms such as cough or difficulty breathing, they should also be tested based on the employee’s condition and not merely by the employer’s determination.

The guidance is offered for employees who fell into one of the following six categories:

1. An employee who tests positive for COVID-19.
2. An employee who develops a fever and symptoms such as a cough or difficulty breathing.
3. An employee who has visited certain countries or traveled on a cruise ship in the past 14 days.
4. An employee who is caring for an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.
5. An employee who has been exposed, outside of work, to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.
6. An employee who has been exposed to an individual who was tested positive for an individual who tested positive for COVID-19.

When an employee tests positive for COVID-19, they should be placed on the emergency sick leave provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). This leave is above and beyond the leave letters normally earn, and is in addition to all employees, whether career or non-career, and without regard to length of employment.

The NALC has been working closely with the USPS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state and local health officials to ensure that employees have the resources they need to continue to do their jobs safely. We have already used this new resource to help employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. The plan is in place to ensure that employees can continue to work safely and with the resources they need to help keep our communities safe and healthy.

Requiring an employee who tests positive for COVID-19 to return to work before they are fully recovered would place them at risk of spreading the virus to others.

The NALC Health Benefit Plan extends coverage to support members during pandemic

As a result of the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic, the NALC Health Benefit Plan has made it a priority to help members get the care they need with a series of measures that will protect our members from getting necessary testing.

Make sure you have the safety supplies you need

NALC and its local letter carriers communicate with their USPS branch on local health matters, agent if they see problems in their office with lack of cleaning, shortage of sanitizing supplies, standing talks not being conducted, social distancing not being practiced, quarantine protocols not being followed or any instruction that conflicts with the guidance being provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The union has been successful in getting many of these issues resolved, but needs to know where the problems are so we can get them fixed.

"We communicate daily with President Fredric Rolando, NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "If you have an issue that you are not comfortable addressing with your shop steward, branch officer or national business agent (NBA), we have a new resource called the COVID-19 Hotline."

If you have not yet installed the new COVID-19 hotlines, you can use the new COVID-19 Hotline to contact your USPS office.

The NALC Health Benefit Plan covers costs for COVID-19 testing. This includes costs for testing prior to treatment and for diagnostic testing and ongoing monitoring for employees who have been exposed to COVID-19. This includes employees who work or are in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Your office will need to have a positive test result to submit a claim for COVID-19 testing. Employees should be linked to a specific provider that has a COVID-19 testing program. They should inform their local employer of the positive test result and then call the local provider to schedule an appointment.

Each employee who tests positive for COVID-19 will be provided with a plan of care that includes the following:

1. COVID-19 testing
2. COVID-19 monitoring
3. Isolation or quarantine
4. Home care
5. Telemedicine
6. Telephonic assistance

The NALC Health Benefit Plan covers costs for COVID-19 prevention. This includes costs for protection and supplies such as masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment.

The NALC Health Benefit Plan covers costs for COVID-19 treatment. This includes costs for medical care and medications.

Telehealth Programs

In addition to the virtual doctor visits available through NALC Health Benefit Plan (provided by MDLIVE when enrolled in the High Option Plan or MDLIVE when enrolled in the CDHP or Value Option Program), the Plan will also offer medically necessary online telehealth visits with other providers. This will be effective March 1 until further notice.

Prescription Benefits

CVS Pharmacy’s is now offering the option of home delivery, available, of all prescription medications at no additional charge and at no cost if you are also using existing shipping options. Prescription medications are shipped at no additional cost to you and you can select which option to receive your medications. Please contact me at 844-279-3432 (TTY: 711) to request your medications to be delivered to your home.

You can also request your medications to be delivered to your local pharmacy. To request your medications to be delivered to your local pharmacy, please contact me at 844-279-3432 (TTY: 711)

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