Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL)

On March 12, 2020, the Commonwealth of Virginia announced the availability of the Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL), which provides employees with up to eighty (80) hours of leave when the State Health Commission and Governor declare communicable disease of public health threat conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Under what circumstances can I use PHEL?**

Employees may use PHEL:

- to attend to their own medical needs or the medical needs of an immediate family member being tested or treated for COVID-19
- if they have chronic health conditions or aged 65 or older and there are no alternative flexible work options to maintain social distancing
- to make alternative childcare arrangements due to closure of day care center/school due to COVID-19.

Employees should speak with their supervisor to confirm teleworking options. Supervisors are encouraged to identify ways that asymptomatic employees can continue working while self-monitoring away from the workplace to mitigate potential risk of exposure to other employees.

- Teleworking – includes performing normal job duties and special projects.
  - The teleworking policy has been expanded to allow parents to work remotely when a child is at home due to closures, on a temporary basis.
- Examples of special projects may include policy/procedure review and development, capturing knowledge to help new employees, electronic record review and clean up for compliance with records retention policies, reviewing past audit findings and ensuring actions taken to address, etc.
- Look for opportunities to cross train employees and grow skills.
- Alternate work schedules and shifts that minimize the numbers of employees in a location at any given time.
- Relocation to areas within an office or facility that are more isolated or have less foot traffic.

**Who is eligible for PHEL?**

Employees required by public health officials to be monitored during the incubation period may use PHEL to continue pay for that period of time. Up to 80 hours of Public Health Emergency Leave is currently available to all state employees, including classified, faculty, administrative/professional faculty, adjunct faculty, wage, graduate research assistants and hourly student workers (wage) provided they are actively employed at the time the leave is needed.
PHEL will be pro-rated based on number of hours employees are normally scheduled to work. The maximum paid leave must not exceed the maximum number of hours an employee would normally work each week.

- Full-time employees will receive up to 80 hours
- Part-time employees (less than 1.0 FTE) will receive pro-rated paid leave based on FTE or the hours normally scheduled to work. For example:
  - 0.50 FTE part-time employee would be granted up to 40 hours
  - If a wage employee normally works 20 hours per week, the maximum amount of paid leave should be 20 hours per week.
  - When a wage employee’s hours vary, use an average as the maximum.

*Affordable Care Act (ACA) considerations and the 1,500-hour threshold still must be taken into consideration.*
- Federal Work Study students’ eligibility for PHEL is under review.

**How do I use PHEL?**

1. Notify supervisor of the need to use leave.
2. Follow normal leave recording procedures.
   a. Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL) is an Earning line item on your timesheets in PatriotWeb Self-Service.
   b. For those who do not record time/leave in Patriot Web, please complete a [paper timesheet](#) (labeled “Public Health Emergency Leave Timesheet”) and submit it to payroll@gmu.edu. Enter the dates and hours used into the “Other: PHEL” leave category.
3. Provide medical documentation to benefits@gmu.edu.
4. If eligible for the Virginia Sickness and Disability Program (VSDP), short-term disability claim must be filed.
   a. Please contact the Benefits team at benefits@gmu.edu.
   b. Please call the Reed Group at 1-877-928-7021.
5. If the employee is in the Traditional Sick Leave program, and eligible for Family and Medical Leave (FMLA), FMLA claim should be filed.
   a. Contact the Benefits team at benefits@gmu.edu.

**What happens if I or my family member has not recovered from COVID-19 after I exhaust the 80 hours of PHEL?**
The employee and/or supervisor must contact benefits@gmu.edu to discuss their personal situation.

Visit the [Mason COVID-19 website](#) to find current information on the evolving coronavirus outbreak and the actions the university is taking to mitigate the spread of the disease.