

UPDATED Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL)

The Commonwealth of Virginia has granted an exception to the Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL) policy effective March 26, 2020, to permit up to 160 hours* total of this paid leave.

**Pro-rated for <100% benefited part-time employees and non-benefited part-time employees.*

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 are age 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 centers/schools due to COVID-19
- if an employee's job is not conducive to telework or other alternatives are not possible

As a reminder, employees who are designated as essential to agency operations are expected to report to work as scheduled.

Telework and alternative work options should be explored first. 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.

Effective March 26, 2020 the number of PHEL hours is expanded from 80 to 160. This leave is currently available to all state employees, including classified, faculty, administrative/professional faculty, and non-benefited part-time employees. Non-benefited part-time employees include adjunct faculty, non-student wage workers, graduate assistants, and student wage workers 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. Non-benefited part-time employees will be allowed up to the maximum they would normally work during a four-week period.

- Full-time employees will receive up to 160 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 80 hours
 - If a non-benefited part-time employee normally works 20 hours per week, the maximum amount of paid leave should be 20 hours per week.
 - When a non-benefited part-time employee's hours vary, use an average as the maximum.
 - Non-benefited part-time employees will be granted up to 80 hours
 - *Hours of paid leave awarded to non-benefited part-time employees must be counted toward the 1500-hour threshold and will be included in Affordable Care Act reporting requirements.*
- Federal Work Study students
 - Supervisors of students on Federal Work Study should work directly with the Office of Student Financial Aid as there is additional documentation that will need to be filed (contact dkroll@gmu.edu to submit that paperwork.)

How do I use PHEL?

1. Notify supervisor of the need to use leave.
2. Record the leave on the timesheet using the newly added PHEL category.
 - 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.

- c. If non-exempt employees (including wages) are working/teleworking, regular hours worked should be entered.
3. Use of PHEL for treatment of (or exposure to) COVID-19 or another chronic health condition, may require medical documentation. We understand that due to the strain on the medical community at this time, you may have to submit that documentation to benefits@gmu.edu at a later date. Therefore, employees may use PHEL without the normally required medical documentation; however, documentation may be requested in the future.
4. If eligible for the Virginia Sickness and Disability Program (VSDP), short-term disability claim must be filed.
 - a. 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 exhaust the 160 hours of PHEL and still need emergency leave?

We will continue to coordinate closely with the Commonwealth and provide any additional leave relief when it becomes available. Employees who have exhausted the 160 hours allotted must contact benefits@gmu.edu to discuss their specific 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.