

**Law Review and Journal Commentaries**

Federal Leave Act Broadens N.J. Coverage. David H. Ben-Asher, Elliot M. Baumgart, 133 N.J.L.J. No. 16, 10 (1993).

**13:14-1.4 Terms of leave**

(a) Family leave may be taken for up to 12 weeks within any 24 month period. The calculation of the 24 month

period shall commence with the commencement of the family leave. The leave may be paid, unpaid or a combination of paid and unpaid. The employee who requests the leave must provide the employer reasonable advance notice, the length of which to be determined by the type of leave requested.

(b) An employer may establish a policy which requires employees to provide such notice in writing, except that such policy must provide that, in emergent circumstances, an employee may provide the employer with oral notice when written notice is impracticable. The policy may require that an employee must provide the employer written notice after submitting oral notice. A policy requiring written notice shall not be applicable to an employee unless the employer adequately informs the employee of such a policy.

### 13:14-1.5 Leave entitlements

(a) An eligible employee may take 12 weeks of family leave within any 24 month period in order to provide care made necessary by reason of:

1. The birth of a child of the employee;
2. The placement for adoption of a child with an employee; or
3. The serious health condition of family member of the employee.

(b) The leave may be paid, unpaid or a combination of paid and unpaid. Should an eligible employee take less than 12 weeks of family leave for any of the above reasons, such employee shall be entitled to take additional leave for any of the above reasons provided that the total leave taken does not exceed 12 weeks in any consecutive 24 month period and the other qualifications and restrictions contained in the Act, attendant to each type of leave, are not abridged.

(c) An eligible employee is entitled to up to 12 consecutive weeks of family leave in order to care for such employee's newly born child or child placed for adoption with such employee. An employee is entitled to a family leave for the birth or adoption of a child if the employer falls within the statutory definition of employer at the time leave commences and commencement of the leave begins within one year of the birth or adoption of the child. An employee taking a family leave for either of these reasons may take such leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule only if agreed to by the employee and the employer.

1. An employee who takes a leave for these purposes shall provide the employer with notice no later than 30 days prior to the commencement of the leave, except where emergent circumstances warrant shorter notice.

(d) An employee whose family member (as defined by the Act) has a serious health condition is entitled to up to 12 weeks of family leave taken on a consecutive, reduced leave or when medically necessary, intermittent basis. The care that an employee provides need not be exclusive and may be given in conjunction with any other care provided. When requesting family leave on an intermittent basis or reduced leave schedule, the employee shall make a reasonable effort to schedule such leave so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the employer.

1. An employee who takes a leave in connection with the serious health condition of a family member shall provide the employer with notice, no later than 15 days prior to the commencement of the leave, except where emergent circumstances warrant shorter notice.

2. For purposes of this subsection, the total time within which an intermittent leave is taken may not exceed a 12 month period, if such leave is taken in connection with a single serious health condition. Intermittent leaves taken in connection with more than one serious health condition episode must be taken within a consecutive 24 month period, or until such time as the employee's 12 week family leave entitlement is exhausted, whichever is shorter. Any remaining family leave to which the employee is entitled, subsequent to the expiration of any or all intermittent leaves, may be taken in a manner consistent with this chapter.

3. For purposes of this subsection, an employee taking a family leave on a reduced leave schedule shall not be entitled to such leave for more than a consecutive 24 week period. An eligible employee shall be entitled to only one leave on a reduced leave schedule during any consecutive 24 month period. Any remaining family leave to which the employee is entitled subsequent to the expiration of a leave taken on a reduced leave schedule may be taken on a consecutive or intermittent basis.

(e) An employee's entitlement to return to work prior to the prearranged expiration of a requested family leave shall be governed by the employer's policy with respect to other leaves of absence.

1. If an employer permits an employee to return to work prior to the prearranged expiration of other leaves, then that policy shall similarly govern an employee's entitlement to return to work prior to the prearranged expiration of the requested family leave.

2. If an employer does not permit an employee to return to work prior to the prearranged expiration of other leaves, then the employee is not entitled to return to work prior to the prearranged expiration of family leave.

3. An employer which does not have a policy of either permitting or denying an employee to return to work prior to the prearranged expiration of any other leave of absence shall permit an employee to return to work prior to the prearranged expiration of requested family leave if the early return of an employee will not cause the employer undue hardship, such as, requiring the employer to incur the expense of continuing the employment of a temporary employee who was hired to replace the employee who is taking family leave.

(f) An employer shall not require an employee to take a leave of absence beyond the period of time that an employee requests family leave.

**13:14-1.6 Disability leave**

Disability leave is separate from, and in addition to, any family leave provided by the Act.

**13:14-1.7 Accrued paid leave**

For the purpose of governing the use of accrued paid leave, employers shall treat family leave in the same matter as similar leaves of absence have been treated. If an employer has had a past practice or policy of requiring its employees to exhaust all accrued paid leave during a leave of absence, the employer may require employees to do so during a family leave. If an employer has a policy of allowing employees to take unpaid leaves without first exhausting accrued paid leave while on family leave, it shall not require employees to exhaust accrued paid leave while on family leave. In situations where an employer does not have an established policy in this regard, the employee shall be entitled to utilize any accrued paid leave as part of the family leave. If such an employee determines not to utilize accrued paid leave, the employer shall not require such employee to utilize any accrued paid leave as part of the leave. Where an employer maintains leaves of absence which provide different policies and/or practices regarding the use of accrued paid leave, the employer shall treat family leave in the same manner as that other leave of absence which most closely resembles family leave.

**13:14-1.8 Other employment**

An employee on family leave may not engage in other full-time employment during the term of the leave, unless such employment commenced prior to the leave and is not otherwise prohibited by law. During the term of family leave an employee may commence part-time employment which shall not exceed half the regularly scheduled hours worked for the employer from whom the employee requested leave. An employee may continue part-time employment which commenced prior to the employee's family leave, at the same number of hours that the employee was regularly scheduled prior to such leave. An employer may not maintain a policy or practice which prohibits part-time employment during the course of a leave.

**13:14-1.9 Exemptions**

(a) An employer is not required to grant a family leave to any employee who would otherwise be eligible under this Act if:

1. The employee's base salary ranks within the highest paid five percent or his or her base salary is one of the seven highest, whichever number of employees is greater (for purposes of this exception, all employees of an employer whether employed in New Jersey or not shall be included in this calculation);

2. The employer can demonstrate that the granting of the leave would cause a substantial and grievous economic injury to the employer's operations; and

3. The employer notifies the employee of its intent to deny the leave when such determination is made.

**13:14-1.10 Certification by an employee**

(a) An employer may require an employee who requests family leave to sign a form of certification attesting that such employee is taking family leave for the birth or adoption of a child or to care for a family member because of that family member's serious health condition, whichever is applicable. The employer may not require the employee to sign or otherwise submit a form of certification attesting to additional facts, including the employee's eligibility for family leave. Any employee who refuses to sign such certification may be denied the requested leave.

1. An employer may subject an employee to reasonable disciplinary measures, depending on the circumstances, when an employee intentionally misrepresents that such employee is taking family leave for the birth or adoption of a child or to care for a family member because of that family member's serious health condition, whichever is applicable. The form of certification established by the employer shall contain a statement warning the employee of the consequences of refusing to sign the certification or falsely certifying.

(b) An employer may require that any period of family leave be supported by certification issued by a duly licensed health care provider or any other health care provider determined by the Director to be capable of providing adequate certification.

1. Where the certification is for the serious health condition of a family member of the employee, the certification shall be sufficient if it states the date on which the serious health condition commenced, the probable duration of the condition and the medical facts within the provider's knowledge regarding the condition.

2. Where the certification is for the birth or placement of the child, the certification need only state the date of birth or date of placement, whichever is appropriate.

3. In any case in which the employer has reason to doubt the validity of the certification provided pursuant to (b)1 above, the employer may require, at its own expense, that an employee obtain an opinion regarding the serious health condition from a second health care provider designated or approved, but not employed on a regular basis, by the employer. If the second opinion differs from the certification provided pursuant to (b)1 above, the employer may require, at its own expense, that the employee obtain the opinion of a third health care provider designated or approved jointly by the employer and the employee concerning the serious health condition. The opinion of the third health care provider shall be considered to be final and shall be binding on the employer and the employee.

(c) An employer shall not use the certification requirements provided in (a) and (b) above to intimidate, harass or otherwise discourage an employee from requesting or taking family leave or asserting any of the employee's rights to family leave under these regulations or the Act.

#### **13:14-1.11 Reinstatement**

(a) Upon the expiration of a family leave, an employee shall be restored to the position such employee held immediately prior to the commencement of the leave. If such position has been filled, the employer shall reinstate such employee to an equivalent position of like seniority, status, employment benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment.

(b) If, during a family leave provided by the Act, the employer experiences a reduction in force or layoff and the employee would have lost the employee's position had the employee not been on leave, as a result of the reduction in force or pursuant to the good faith operation of a bona fide layoff and recall system including a system under a collective bargaining agreement where applicable, the employee shall not be entitled to reinstatement to the former or an equivalent position. The employee shall retain all rights under any applicable layoff and recall system, including a system under a collective bargaining agreement, as if the employee had not taken the leave.

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Job Equivalence is Key Leave Issue. Courtney E. Redfern, 136 N.J.L.J. No. 15, 526 (1994).

#### **13:14-1.12 Multiple requests for family leave**

An employer shall grant a family leave to more than one employee from the same family (for example, brother and a sister) at the same time, provided such employees are otherwise eligible for the leave.

#### **13:14-1.13 Employers with multiple leaves of absence**

Where an employer maintains leaves of absence which provide benefits, other than health benefits, that differ depending upon the type of leave taken, such employer shall provide those benefits to an employee on family leave in the same manner as it provides benefits to employees who are granted that other leave of absence which most closely resembles family leave.

#### **13:14-1.14 Retroactivity**

Any leave of absence granted to an employee prior to the effective date of the Act shall not be considered a family leave for purposes of determining an employee's entitlement to a family leave under the Act, with the following exception: any period of leave taken by an employee within one year prior to the employee's eligibility for family leave, for the purpose of providing care made necessary because of the birth or placement for adoption of a child, shall be considered as part of the employee's family leave entitlement under the Act, if such leave maintained the same benefits and preserved the same rights as are required by the Act.

#### **13:14-1.15 Prohibition against retaliation**

No employer shall discharge or in any way retaliate against or penalize any employee because such employee sought information about family leave provisions, filed a complaint alleging a violation of the Act or this chapter or exercised any right granted under the Act or this chapter.

#### **13:14-1.16 Processing of complaints**

Any complaint filed in the Division which alleges a violation of the Act or these regulations shall be processed in the same manner as a complaint filed under the terms of N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 13:4.