

# REGULATION GUIDE

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Jan 21

## R 1642 EARNED SICK LEAVE LAW

### A. Definitions Relative to Policy and Regulation 1642 and the New Jersey Earned Sick Leave Law (Act)

“Act” means the New Jersey Earned Sick Leave Law – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-1. through 34:11D-11.

“Benefit year” means the period of twelve consecutive months, July 1 through June 30, as established by an employer in which an employee shall accrue and use earned sick leave as provided pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2, provided that once the starting date of the benefit year is established by the employer it shall not be changed unless the employer notifies the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development of the change in accordance with regulations promulgated pursuant to the Act. The Commissioner shall impose a benefit year on any employer the Commissioner determines is changing the benefit year at times or in ways that prevent the accrual or use of earned sick leave by an employee.

“Certified Domestic Violence Specialist” means a person who has fulfilled the requirements of certification as a Domestic Violence Specialist established by the New Jersey Association of Domestic Violence Professionals.

“Child” means a biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild or legal ward of an employee, child of a domestic partner or civil union partner of the employee.

“Civil union” means a civil union as defined in N.J.S.A. 37:1-29.

“Commissioner” means the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development.

“Department” means the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.



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“Designated domestic violence agency” means a county-wide organization with a primary purpose to provide services to victims of domestic violence, and which provides services that conform to the core domestic violence services profile as defined by the Division of Child Protection and Permanency in the Department of Children and Families and is under contract with the division for the express purpose of providing the services.

“Domestic or sexual violence” means stalking, any sexually violent offense, as defined in N.J.S.A. 30:4-27.26, or domestic violence as defined in N.J.S.A. 2C:25-19, and N.J.S.A. 17:29B-16.

“Domestic partner” means a domestic partner as defined in N.J.S.A. 26:8A-3.

“Employee” means, for the purposes of Policy and Regulation 1642, an individual engaged in service for compensation to a local school district, regional school district, county vocational school, or charter school of the State who is not provided with sick leave with full pay pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:30-2 or any other law, rule, or regulation of New Jersey and is eligible to accrue earned sick leave in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

“Employer” means, for the purposes of Policy and Regulation 1642, a local school district, regional school district, county vocational school, or charter school of the State who does not provide sick leave with full pay to an employee pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:30-2 or any other law, rule, or regulation of New Jersey and is required to comply with the requirements of the Act.

“Family member” means a child, grandchild, sibling, spouse, domestic partner, civil union partner, parent, or grandparent of an employee, or a spouse, domestic partner, or civil union partner of a parent or grandparent of an employee, or a sibling of a spouse, domestic partner, or civil union partner of the employee, or any other individual related by blood to the employee or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

“Health care professional” means any person licensed under Federal, State, or local law, or the laws of a foreign nation, to provide health care services, or any other person who has been authorized to provide health care by a licensed health care professional, including but not limited to doctors, nurses, and emergency room personnel.



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“Parent” means a biological, adoptive, or foster parent, stepparent, or legal guardian of an employee or of the employee’s spouse, domestic partner, or civil union partner, or a person who stood in loco parentis of the employee or the employee’s spouse, domestic partner, or civil union partner when the employee, spouse or partner was a minor child.

“Retaliatory personnel action” means denial of any right guaranteed under the Act and any threat, discharge, including a constructive discharge, suspension, demotion, unfavorable reassignment, refusal to promote, disciplinary action, sanction, reduction of work hours, reporting or threatening to report the actual or suspected immigrant status of an employee or the employee’s family, or any other adverse action against an employee.

“Sibling” means a biological, foster, or adopted sibling of an employee.

“Spouse” means a husband or wife.

## B. Provision of Earned Sick Leave – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2

1. The employer shall provide earned sick leave in accordance with the Act for each employee working for the employer.
2. For every thirty hours worked, the employee shall accrue one hour of earned sick leave. The employer will not provide an employee their full complement of earned sick leave for a benefit year as required under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2 on the first day of each benefit year in accordance with the Act.
3. The employer will not permit the employee to accrue or use in any benefit year, or carry forward from one benefit year to the next, more than forty hours of earned sick leave.
  - a. Unless the employee has accrued earned sick leave prior to October 29, 2018, the earned sick leave shall begin to accrue on October 29, 2018 for any employee who is hired and commences employment before October 29, 2018 and the employee shall be eligible to use the earned sick leave beginning on February 26, 2019 after the employee commences employment.



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- b. If the employee's employment commences after October 29, 2018, the earned sick leave shall begin to accrue upon the date that employment commences. The employee shall be eligible to use the earned sick leave beginning on the 120<sup>th</sup> calendar day after the employee commences employment.
4. The employer shall be in compliance with N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2 if the employer offers paid time off to an employee, which is fully paid and shall include, but is not limited to personal days, vacation days, and sick days, and may be used for the purposes of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3 in the manner provided by the Act, and is accrued at a rate equal to or greater than the rate described in N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2.
5. The employer shall pay the employee for earned sick leave at the same rate of pay with the same benefits as the employee normally earns, except that the pay rate shall not be less than the minimum wage required for the employee pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a4.
6. Upon the mutual consent of the employee and employer, an employee may voluntarily choose to work additional hours or shifts during the same or following pay period, in lieu of hours or shifts missed, but shall not be required to work additional hours or shifts or use accrued earned sick leave. The employer may not require, as a condition of an employee using earned sick leave, that the employee search for or find a replacement worker to cover the hours during which the employee is using earned sick leave.
7. If an employee is transferred to a separate division, entity, or location, but remains employed by the same employer, then the employee shall be entitled to all earned sick leave accrued at the prior division, entity, or location, and shall be entitled to use the accrued earned sick leave as provided in the Act.



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8. If an employee is terminated, laid off, furloughed, or otherwise separated from employment with the employer, any unused accrued earned sick leave shall be reinstated upon the re-hiring or reinstatement of the employee to that employment, within six months of termination, being laid off or furloughed, or separation, and prior employment with the employer shall be counted towards meeting the eligibility requirements set forth in N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2.
  9. The employer may choose the increments in which its employees may use earned sick leave, provided that the largest increment of earned sick leave an employee may be required to use for each shift for which earned sick leave is used shall be the number of hours the employee was scheduled to work during that shift.
- C. Permitted Usage of Earned Sick Leave – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3
1. The employer shall permit an employee to use the earned sick leave accrued pursuant to the Act for any of the following:
    - a. Time needed for diagnosis, care, or treatment of, or recovery from, an employee's mental or physical illness, injury or other adverse health condition, or for preventive medical care for the employee;
    - b. Time needed for the employee to aid or care for a family member of an employee during diagnosis, care, or treatment of, or recovery from, the family member's mental or physical illness, injury or other adverse health condition, or during preventive medical care for the family member;
    - c. Absence necessary due to circumstances resulting from the employee, or a family member of an employee, being a victim of domestic or sexual violence, if the leave is to allow the employee to obtain for the employee or the family member: medical attention needed to recover from physical or psychological injury or disability caused by domestic or sexual violence; services from a designated domestic violence agency or other victim services organization; psychological or other counseling; relocation; or legal services, including obtaining a restraining order or preparing for, or participating in, any civil or criminal legal proceeding related to the domestic or sexual violence;



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- d. Time during which the employee is not able to work because of:
- (1) A closure of the employee's workplace, or the school or place of care of a child of an employee, by order of a public official or because of a state of emergency declared by the Governor of New Jersey, due to an epidemic or other public health emergency;
  - (2) The declaration of a state of emergency by the Governor of New Jersey, or the issuance by a health care provider or the New Jersey Commissioner of Health or other public health authority of a determination that the presence in the community of the employee, or a member of the employee's family in need of care by the employee, would jeopardize the health of others; ~~or~~
  - (3) A state of emergency declared by the Governor of New Jersey, or upon the recommendation, direction, or order of a healthcare provider or the New Jersey Commissioner of Health or other authorized public official, the employee undergoes isolation or quarantine, or cares for a family member in quarantine, as a result of suspected exposure to a communicable disease and a finding by the provider or authority that the presence in the community of the employee or family member would jeopardize the health of others; or
- e. Time needed by the employee in connection with a child of the employee to attend a school-related conference, meeting, function or other event requested or required by a school administrator, teacher, or other professional staff member responsible for the child's education, or to attend a meeting regarding care provided to the child in connection with the child's health conditions or disability.



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2. If an employee's need to use earned sick leave is foreseeable, the employer will require advance notice, not to exceed seven calendar days prior to the date the leave is to begin, of the intention to use the leave and its expected duration, and shall make a reasonable effort to schedule the use of earned sick leave in a manner that does not unduly disrupt the operations of the employer. If the reason for the leave is not foreseeable, the employer will require an employee to give notice of the intention as soon as practicable, if the employer has notified the employee of this requirement.
  - a. The employer may prohibit employees from using foreseeable earned sick leave on certain dates provided reasonable notice of these dates is provided to employees and the employer will require reasonable documentation if sick leave that is not foreseeable is used during those dates.
  - b. For earned sick leave of three or more consecutive days, the employer will require reasonable documentation that the leave is being taken for the purpose permitted under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.a. and C.1. above.
  - c. If the leave is permitted under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.a.(1) and C.1.a. above or N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.a.(2) and C.1.b. above, documentation signed by a health care professional who is treating the employee or the family member of the employee indicating the need for the leave and, if possible, number of days of leave, shall be considered reasonable documentation.
  - d. If the leave is permitted under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.a.(3) and C.1.c. above because of domestic or sexual violence, any of the following shall be considered reasonable documentation of the domestic or sexual violence: medical documentation; a law enforcement agency record or report; a court order; documentation that the perpetrator of the domestic or sexual violence has been convicted of a domestic or sexual violence offense; certification from a certified Domestic Violence Specialist or a representative of a designated domestic violence agency or other victim



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services organization; or other documentation or certification provided by a social worker, counselor, member of the clergy, shelter worker, health care professional, attorney, or other professional who has assisted the employee or family member in dealing with the domestic or sexual violence.

- e. If the leave is permitted under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.a.(4) and C.1.d. above, a copy of the order of the public official or the determination by the health authority shall be considered reasonable documentation.
  - f. If the leave is permitted under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.a.(5) and C.1.e. above, tangible proof of the reasons outlined in N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.a.(5) and C.1.e. above shall be considered reasonable documentation.
3. Nothing in the Act shall be deemed to require the employer to provide earned sick leave for an employee's leave for purposes other than those identified in N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3, or prohibit the employer from taking disciplinary action against an employee who uses earned sick leave for purposes other than those identified in N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3.
4. The employer will provide an offer to an employee for payment of unused earned sick leave in the final month of the employer's benefit year. The employee shall choose, no later than ten calendar days from the date of the employer's offer, whether to accept a payment or decline a payment. If the employee does not accept the employer's offer within ten calendar days from the date of the employer's offer, the employee is deemed to have declined the employer's offer.
- a. If the employee agrees to receive a payment, the employee shall choose a payment for the full amount of unused earned sick leave or for fifty percent of the amount of unused earned sick leave. The payment amount shall be based on the same rate of pay that the employee earns at the time of the payment.





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- b. If the employee declines a payment for unused earned sick leave, or agrees to a payment for fifty percent of the amount of unused sick leave, the employee shall be entitled to carry forward any unused or unpaid earned sick leave to the proceeding benefit year as provided pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2.a. and B.1., B.2., and B.3. above.
    - c. If the employee agrees to a payment for the full amount of unused earned sick leave, the employee shall not be entitled to carry forward any earned sick leave to the proceeding benefit year pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11D-2.a. and B.1, B.2., and B.3. above.
5. If the employer provides an employee with the full complement of earned sick leave for a benefit year on the first day of each benefit year as indicated in B.2. above, then the employer shall provide to the employee a payment for the full amount of unused earned sick leave in the final month of the employer's benefit year in accordance with C.4. above. The employer may pay the employee the full amount of unused earned sick leave in the final month of a benefit year pursuant to B.2. above and N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3 only if the employer forgoes, with respect to that employee, the accrual process for earned sick leave during the next benefit year.
6. Unless the employer's policy or a collective bargaining agreement provides for the payment of accrued earned sick leave upon termination, resignation, retirement, or other separation from employment, an employee shall not be entitled under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-3 to payment of unused earned sick leave upon the separation from employment.
7. Any information the employer possesses regarding the health of an employee or any family member of the employee or domestic or sexual violence affecting an employee or employee's family member shall be treated as confidential and not disclosed except to the affected employee or with the written permission of the affected employee.



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D. Retaliation, Discrimination Prohibited – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4 and N.J.S.A. 34:11D-12

1. No employer shall take retaliatory personnel action or discriminate against an employee who accrues sick leave under the Act because the employee requests or uses earned sick leave either in accordance with the Act or the employer's own earned sick leave policy for employees covered under the Act. Any complaints alleging a violation of the Act shall be filed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4.
  - a. The employer shall not count earned sick leave taken under the Act as an absence that may result in the employee being subject to discipline, discharge, demotion, suspension, a loss or reduction of pay, or any other adverse action.
2. There shall be a rebuttable presumption of an unlawful retaliatory personnel action under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4 whenever the employer takes adverse action against an employee within ninety days of when that employee:
  - a. Files a complaint with the Department or a court alleging a violation of any provision of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4;
  - b. Informs any person about the employer's alleged violation of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4;
  - c. Cooperates with the Department or other persons in the investigation or prosecution of any alleged violation of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4;
  - d. Opposes any policy, practice, or act that is unlawful under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4; or
  - e. Informs any person of his or her rights under N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4.
3. Protections of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4 shall apply to any person who mistakenly but in good faith alleges violations of the Act.



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4. Any violator of the provisions of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-4 shall be subject to relevant penalties and remedies provided by the “New Jersey State Wage and Hour Law,” N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a et seq., including the penalties and remedies provided by N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a24, and relevant penalties and remedies provided by N.J.S.A. 2C:40A-2, for discharge or other discrimination.
  5. The employer shall not, during the Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency declared by the Governor of New Jersey in Executive Order 103 of 2020 concerning the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, terminate or otherwise penalize an employee if the employee requests or takes time off from work based on the written or electronically transmitted recommendation of a medical professional licensed in New Jersey that the employee take that time off for a specified period of time because the employee has, or is likely to have, an infectious disease, as defined in N.J.S.A. 26:13-2, which may infect others at the employee’s workplace.
    - a. The employer shall not, following that specified period of time as per D.5. above, refuse to reinstate the employee to employment in the position held when the leave commenced with no reduction in seniority, status, employment benefits, pay, or other terms and conditions of employment.
- E. Violations; Remedies, Penalties, Other Measures – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-5
1. Any failure of the employer to make available or pay earned sick leave as required by the Act, or any other violation of the Act, shall be regarded as a failure to meet the wage payment requirements of the “New Jersey State Wage and Hour Law,” N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a et seq., or other violation of the New Jersey State Wage and Hour Law, as the case may be, and remedies, penalties, and other measures provided by the New Jersey State Wage and Hour Law, N.J.S.A. 34:11-58, and N.J.S.A. 2C:40A-2 for failure to pay wages or other violations of the New Jersey State Wage and Hour Law shall be applicable, including, but not limited to, penalties provided pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a22 and 34:11-56a24, and



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civil actions by employees pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a25, except that an award to an employee in a civil act shall include, in addition to the amount provided pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a25, any actual damages suffered by the employee as the result of the violation plus an equal amount of liquidated damages.

## F. Retention of Records, Access – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-6

1. The employer shall retain records documenting hours worked by employees and earned sick leave accrued/advanced, used, paid, and paid out and carried over by/to employees, for a period of five years, and shall, upon demand, allow the Department access to those records to monitor compliance with the requirements of the Act.
  - a. If an employee makes a claim the employer has failed to provide earned sick leave required by the Act and the employer has not maintained or retained adequate records documenting hours worked by the employee and earned sick leave taken by the employee or does not allow the Department access to the records, it shall be presumed the employer has failed to provide the earned sick leave, absent clear and convincing evidence otherwise.
2. In addition, the penalties provided by the “New Jersey State Wage and Hour Law,” N.J.S.A. 34:11-56a et seq. for violations of the requirements of the New Jersey State Wage and Hour Law regarding the maintaining and disclosure of records shall apply to violations of the requirements of N.J.S.A. 34:11D-6.

## G. Notification to Employees – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-7

1. The employer shall provide notification, in a form issued by the Commissioner, to employees of their rights under the Act, including the amount of earned sick leave to which they are entitled and the terms of its use and remedies provided by the Act to employees if the employer fails to provide the required benefits or retaliates against employees exercising their rights under the Act.



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- a. The employer shall conspicuously post the notification in a place or places accessible to all employees in each of the employer's workplaces.
- b. The employer shall also provide each employee with a written copy of the notification: not later than thirty days after the form of the notification is issued; at the time of the employee's hiring, if the employee is hired after the issuance; and at any time, when first requested by the employee.
- c. The Commissioner shall make the notifications available in English, Spanish, and any other language that the Commissioner determines is the first language of a significant number of workers in the State and the employer shall use the notification in English, Spanish, or any other language for which the Commissioner has provided notifications and which is the first language of a majority of the employer's workforce.

## H. Provisions Preemptive; Construction of Act – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-8

1. No provision of the Act, or any regulations promulgated to implement or enforce the Act, shall be construed as:
  - a. Requiring the employer to reduce, or justifying the employer in reducing, rights or benefits provided by the employer pursuant to the employer's policy or a collective bargaining agreement which are more favorable to employees than those required by the Act or which provide rights or benefits to employees not covered by the Act;
  - b. Preventing or prohibiting the employer from agreeing, through a collective bargaining agreement or employer policy, to provide rights or benefits which are more favorable to employees than those required by the Act or to provide rights or benefits to employees not covered by the Act;



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- c. Prohibiting the employer from establishing a policy whereby an employee may donate unused accrued earned sick leave to another employee or other employees; or
  - d. Superseding any law providing collective bargaining rights for employees, or in any way reducing, diminishing, or adversely affecting those collective bargaining rights, or in any way reducing, diminishing, or affecting the obligations of the employer under those laws.
2. Employees or employee representatives may waive the rights or benefits provided under the Act during the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement.
  3. With respect to employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement in effect on October 29, 2018, no provision of the Act shall apply until the stated expiration of the collective bargaining agreement.
- I. Severability – N.J.S.A. 34:11D-9
1. The provisions of the Act shall be deemed to be severable and if any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence or other part of the Act is declared to be unconstitutional, or the applicability thereof to any person is held invalid, the remainder of the Act shall not thereby be deemed to be unconstitutional or invalid.

Adopted: 5/3/2021

