



City of Tacoma
Human Resources Department

Upcoming Changes

Our Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Policy has been updated to coordinate with Washington State's Paid Family Medical Leave (PFML) program.

The state's PFML program is projected to go into effect January 1, 2020, and is currently in the final phase of rulemaking. The changes outlined below were made to align with how PFML will work with our federally mandated FMLA program.

How Time is Calculated

According to federal FMLA guidelines, you are eligible for FMLA if you have been with the City of Tacoma for at least 12 months, and worked a minimum of 1,250 hours over the past 12 months.

FMLA provides up to 12 weeks of **job-protected leave** in a 12-month period. FMLA leave may be paid or unpaid, depending on what you have in your leave bank.

When it goes into effect in January, the state's PFML program will provide **financial assistance** in the event that you need to care for yourself or your qualified family members. The City of Tacoma's current definition for FMLA of who is considered a qualified family member will expand*, effective January 1, 2020, from *only* including your spouse, child, parent or registered domestic partner to *also* including your parent-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, or de facto parent.

While the amount of PFML financial assistance available to you may vary depending on your wage, Washington state's established median income and other factors, up to 12 weeks of wage replacement in a 52-week period may be available to you through the PFML program.

The circumstances that would qualify you for PFML through the state are very similar to those that would qualify you for job-protected leave under FMLA. Examples include the birth and care of your newborn child; placement of a child with you for adoption or foster care; the need to care for a qualified family member with a serious health condition; or the need to take medical leave if you are unable to work because of a serious health condition.

Beginning January 1, 2020, the City of Tacoma will change the way it calculates your 12-month eligibility period for FMLA as follows:

Current Method

The City of Tacoma currently uses a calendar year method for calculating your 12 weeks of job-protected leave within a 12-month period, which begins January 1 and ends on December 31. Your next 12-month eligibility period would begin on January 1 of the following calendar year.

Example: If you begin taking FMLA leave for the first time beginning February 1, 2019, you would be entitled to take up to 12 weeks of FMLA either continuously or intermittently through December 31, 2019. On January 1, 2020 or thereafter, you would begin a new 12-month eligibility period.

New Method*

Under the new method, the City of Tacoma will calculate your 12 weeks of job-protected leave to begin on the first date FMLA is used, and that eligibility period will end 12 months from that date. Your next 12-month eligibility period would begin the first time you take FMLA leave after completion of any previous 12-month period.

Example: If you take FMLA leave for the first time beginning April 1, 2020, you would be entitled to 12 weeks of FMLA leave, taken either continuously or intermittently, through March 31, 2021. On April 1, 2021 or thereafter, you would begin a new 12-month eligibility period for FMLA beginning on the first date FMLA is taken.

As more information becomes available on this and other important topics, we will share that information with you via mailings to your home, your City of Tacoma email account, Take5 and Newslines, the Gnet News Snapshot, and your supervisor.

*Note: Neither the revised definition of qualified family member, nor the method used to calculate the 12-month eligibility period for FMLA will apply to employees represented by Police Local 6 or Local 26.

Need more details or have specific questions?

Details on Washington state's PFML program, federally mandated FMLA program as well as the City's FMLA policy are available at cityoftacoma.org/benefits.

If you have specific questions at this time, please contact the City of Tacoma's Disability and Leave Management Office at d1m@cityoftacoma.org or (253) 591-5452.