

Guidelines for Implementation of Employee Blood Donation Leave

Section 202-j of the Labor Law mandates that employers provide leave time to employees for the purpose of donating blood. As the entity responsible for the administration of this provision of law, the Department of Labor hereby establishes the following guidelines governing such leave:

I. Definitions

As used in these guidelines, the following terms shall have the following meaning:

- a. "Apheresis" is the collection of individual components of blood, such as platelets, plasma, or double red blood cells.
- b. "Employee" means employee as defined in Labor Law § 202-j (1)(a).
- c. "Employer" means employer as defined in Labor law § 202-j (1) (b).
- d. "Employee's place of employment" means the physical location at which the employee works. Such location may be in a different building on the same location, e.g. another building on a school campus or office complex, so long as such location is affiliated and physically proximate to the employee's physical work location.
- e. "Off-premises blood donation" shall mean blood donation which is not made in connection with a blood drive at the employee's place of employment or in connection with some other convenient time and place set by the employer.
- f. "Donation leave alternative" shall include either a blood drive at the employee's place of employment or a blood donation option at some other convenient time and place set by the employer.

II. Compensation for Leave

Leave granted to employees for off-premises blood donation is not required to be paid leave. Leave taken by employees for donation leave alternatives shall be paid leave given without requiring the employee to use accumulated vacation, personal, sick, or other already existing leave time.

III. Off-Premises Donation

Leave for off-premises donation shall be subject to the following:

- a. Employees taking leave for off-premises blood donation shall be permitted at least one leave period per calendar year of three hours duration during the employee's regular work schedule.
- b. Any additional leave time taken by employees in connection with off-premises blood donation shall be subject to all other rules and guidelines governing leave established by the employer or applicable collective bargaining agreements.
- c. Employers are not required to allow off-premises blood donation leave under Labor Law § 202-j to accrue if it is not used during the calendar year.

IV. Blood Donation Leave Alternatives

As an alternative to providing the leave time otherwise required by Labor Law §202-j and the preceding guidelines for off-premises blood donation, an employer may elect blood donation leave alternatives. Such blood donation leave alternatives shall be subject to the following:

- a. Leave for blood donation leave alternatives shall be paid leave given without use of vacation, personal, sick, or other already existing leave accruals.
- b. Leave for blood donation leave alternatives shall be given twice per calendar year.
- c. Leave for blood donation leave alternatives under this section of the guidelines shall be for the purpose of donating blood at a convenient time and place set by the employer and may include a blood drive at the employee's place of employment. For the purposes of this paragraph, a "convenient time and place set by the employer" shall mean a time that will not require an employee to attend outside of his/her normal work hours and shall not require an employee to travel to a location which is not a reasonable travel distance for employees.
- d. Employee leave time under this section must be given during an employee's work hours. For purposes of this paragraph, "during work hours" means that the blood drive must be held during the employee's regularly scheduled work hours. If an employee provides prompt notice that he or she is not or was not able to participate in a blood donation leave alternative because the employee is or was on leave (such as sick or vacation leave), and if as a result the employer has not provided the employee with the opportunity to participate in at least two blood leave alternatives during working hours in a calendar year, the employer must either make available another such alternative to the employee, or allow the employee to take leave to make an off-premises donation in accordance with section III.
- e. Off-premises donation leave time shall be subject to all the terms and conditions applicable to off-premises donation leave time set forth elsewhere in these guidelines.
- f. Employees donating blood during a blood donation leave alternative must be allowed sufficient leave time necessary to donate blood, to recover, including partaking nourishment after donating, and to return to work.
- g. Nothing herein shall prevent two or more employers from coordinating or co- sponsoring a blood donation leave alternative at a shared work location.
- h. Notwithstanding the discretion afforded employers under this guideline to elect to offer blood donation leave alternatives, employers electing these alternatives are encouraged to offer their employees up to three hours of blood donation leave for the purpose of donating blood components through apheresis should they wish to do so. Such leave would be subject to all the provisions applying to off-premises blood donation set forth elsewhere in these guidelines.
- i. Notice of any blood donation leave alternative shall be prominently posted in the workplace at least two weeks beforehand. To count towards the two blood donation leave alternatives in a calendar year under this section, notice of the final such leave must be provided prior to December 1 of that year. No blood leave alternative should be scheduled during a time when a significant number of employees are out of the office, such as during the last week of December or around other significant holidays.
- j. To meet the requirements of § 202-j through blood donation leave alternatives, at least two such alternatives provided during a calendar year must take place at least sixty days apart.

V. Notice and Recordkeeping

The following notice and recordkeeping requirements shall apply to all leaves for blood donation:

Notice:

- a. Employers must notify employees in writing of their right to take blood donation leave. Such notification must be made in a manner that will ensure that employees see it, such as by posting in a prominent spot in an area where employees congregate, inclusion of notice with employees' paychecks, mailings, notices in employee handbooks, or other comparable method.
- b. Such notice must be provided to all employees within sixty (60) days after issuance of these guidelines, and shall be updated as necessary. If the employer provides written notice directly to the employee, it shall do so at the time of hire to new employees, and thereafter, to all employees on an annual basis, no later than the fifteenth day of January.

- c. The employer may require employees to give reasonable notice of their intended use of leave time governed by these guidelines. If leave is for off-premises blood donation, reasonable notice would consist of notice provided at least three working days prior to the day on which leave will be taken. If leave is for a blood donation leave alternative, reasonable notice would consist of notice two days prior to the day on which leave will be taken.
- d. In cases where the employee fills a position essential to the operation of the employer or necessary to comply with legal requirements, and three days notice is insufficient to allow the employee's position to be filled during the donation, the employer shall require notice no longer than is necessary to feasibly fill the position, but in no case longer than ten working days. The employer shall notify all covered employees of this extended notice requirement in compliance with the notice requirements of these guidelines.
- e. Should the employee experience an emergency requiring that he/she donate blood for his or her own surgery or that of a family member, employers must provide reasonable accommodations for a shorter notice period.

Recordkeeping:

An employer may require employees making off-premises blood donation to show proof of their blood donation in the form of notice of blood donation or a good faith effort at blood donation from the blood bank or some other proof sufficient to the purpose.

VI. Employer Discretion

Nothing herein shall prevent an employer from establishing policies or practices which support more frequent donation of blood by employees including, but not limited to, paid leave, additional blood donation leave, shorter notice periods, or more generous leave periods for donation of blood in preparation for surgery on the employee or an employee's family member.

VII. Collective Bargaining

Nothing herein shall prevent employers and employees, or their representatives, from making the terms and conditions of employee blood donation leave a matter of collective bargaining, provided however, that any collectively bargained conditions affecting blood donation leave shall not diminish the minimum requirements set forth in Labor Law 202-j and these guidelines.

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