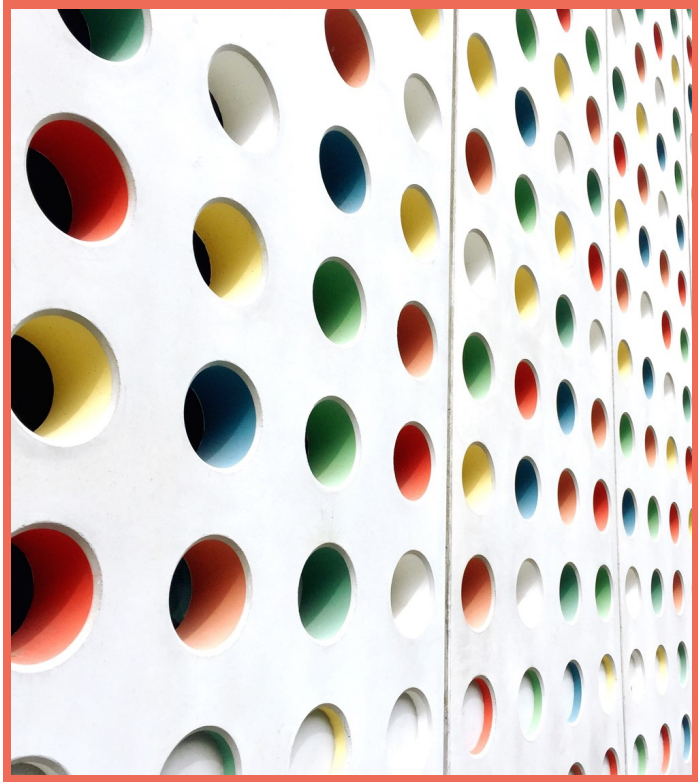


Child Care and Work-Life Resources

Pandemic Guide for State Employees

Updated: Oct. 14 2020

NORTH CAROLINA Office of
State Human Resources

The Office of State Human Resources offers this guide as a resource for state employees needing assistance with child care and work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In-person learning has been delayed in many North Carolina school districts, requiring students to begin the new school year in an unfamiliar virtual environment.

This creates tremendous challenges for both parents/guardians who work outside of the home or who currently telework and their employers.

This resource is designed to provide information to parents/guardians and state agency employers about options to assist employees with school-age children.

OSHR is grateful for the dedication of the members of the Child Care and Work-Life Balance Task Force, whose work informed this publication.

Traditional Child Care Options

This section provides information on child care centers, family child care homes, and preschool programs.

NCDHHS - Child Care Hotline

Families and caregivers in need of child care for children up to age 12 can call the Child Care Hotline at **1-888-600-1685** to be connected directly to care options in their community that meet their families' needs.

NCDHHS - COVID-19 Information for Families

General information and FAQs.

NCDHHS - Search for a Child Care Facility

Find a child care provider in your area.

Search for a Child Care Facility

EAP provider McLaughlin Young (for state agencies) provides a search tool for local child care.

Child Care Services Association

Operates a statewide child care and referral hotline.

NCDHHS Child Care Subsidy Information

Find assistance to help pay for child care.

Traditional Child Care Options

continued

Smart Start

Helps working parents pay for child care and provides health and family support services.

NC Head Start

Supports low income children and their families and includes a Center locator.

NC Pre-K Program

Designed to provide high-quality educational experiences for eligible four-year-old children.

NC Child Care Resource and Referral Council

Assists with finding child care that best meets the needs of your child and family.

Child Care Aware of America

Serves the U.S. Military and Department of Defense families by providing Fee Assistance and Respite Child Care Programs.

Childcare.gov

State-based COVID-19 child care information

Child Care and School Options

Contact your **local school district** through the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) for information **on virtual school support programs**. Includes contact information for 100 county districts, 15 city districts, charter schools, and federal schools.

NC DPI provides **parent resources to support remote learning for children from birth through grade 2**.

CDC: Talking with Children about Coronavirus: Recommendations to help **adults have conversations with children about COVID-19** and ways they can avoid getting and spreading the disease.

Employer-Based Options

Resources and options employers may consider to support employees with school-age children.

FLEXIBLE/REDUCED WORK SCHEDULES

If operational needs allow, supervisors may consider allowing employees to flex their regular schedule (or request a reduced schedule) to accommodate their children returning to school or to work around a spouse/partner's schedule so they can switch off caring for the child(ren) in school. In each scenario, it is important to establish parameters.

Employees must acknowledge the flexibility that the agency is trying to provide with work-life balance. This includes mutual acceptance of defined expectations in terms of the critical business needs, routine job tasks, and criteria to determine if responsibilities are being met. If operational needs allow, examples of possible scenarios include:

Scenario 1: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing employees to work a split schedule, such as 6-10 a.m. and 3:30-7:30 p.m.

Scenario 2: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing compressed work week of four 10-hour days (especially if two of those are weekend days, provides three weekdays with children for school).

Scenario 3: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing switching out two weekend days for two weekdays as days off.

Scenario 4: Employees may request supervisor consideration for the ability to telework, coming onsite for important meetings or other required activities.

Employer-Based Options

Continued

Scenario 5: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing ways to create different schedules within a section to meet multiple employees' needs. For example, four-hour schedules per day, 12-hour shifts, rotate weekday/weekend shifts to allow more unscheduled weekdays, etc.

Scenario 6: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing creation of partial onsite/partial telework arrangement with fewer onsite hours and more flexibility to schedule the telework hours at night.

Scenario 7: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing employees to reduce their work hours for a period of time.

Note: A reduced schedule may result in a reduction in pay or benefits. Discuss your specific situation with your supervisor.

TEMPORARY REASSIGNMENT OF EMPLOYEES

Agencies may reassign employees as appropriate, balancing employee needs with the agency's operational needs. This could include employees who temporarily share or switch shifts to accommodate child care needs.

Temporary reassignment allows employees who may need a particular schedule to switch with other employees in like-jobs among divisions in an Agency — if the other division has need of that schedule.

Agencies must consider such requests in a manner that is fair and consistent for all employees.

Employer-Based Options

Continued

EMPLOYEE NETWORKS

Employee Networks - Use personal email or social platforms to facilitate sign-up lists, chat rooms, Google Docs, etc. to connect with colleagues who live in proximity or have children in same grades to connect and share supervision and support of students.

Employees may use their own, non-work resources to create lists for:

- Reliable teenagers or known adults available to oversee younger children during virtual school
- Employees interested in establishing a learning pod environment with other families so parents can coordinate schedules and oversight of multiple children
- List of tutoring needs that may be provided by staff (virtual or in-person) on nights/days off to help support each other in subjects of expertise and/or provide breaks between a group of parents.

What Are Learning Pods?

Learning Pods are an increasingly popular idea being embraced by parents/caregivers across the nation. The learning pod solution is a system in which parents/caregivers form cohorts to monitor and support a small number of students to guide them through virtual instruction.

This solution not only allows the "off-duty" parents/caregivers to focus on their jobs, but also allows students to interact and learn together.

Employer-Based Options

Continued

LEAVE OPTIONS

In addition to using your earned vacation and sick leave, you may be eligible to use a variety of leave options with supervisory approval, if offered at your agency.

These options may include:

- **Paid Sick Leave** – Means paid leave under FFCRA's Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act.
- **Expanded Family and Medical Leave** – Means paid leave under FFCRA's Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act.
- **Make Up Leave** – Agencies may allow employees to make up leave.
- **Advance Leave** – Agencies may advance leave not to exceed the amount an employee can accumulate during the current calendar year.
- **Leave Banks** – Agencies may offer leave bank options for employees with child care issues.
- **Community Service Leave** - See page 11.

**The employee cannot take FFCRA leave if their child's school is open, but the employee opts out of in-person learning and se-*

Employer-Based Options

Continued

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The State of North Carolina knows that there are times when life and work can be stressful, particularly recognizing the challenges created by COVID-19. The North Carolina Employee Assistance Program (NC EAP) is a state-sponsored benefit program that offers counseling for personal and work-related concerns, as well as resources on personal, financial, or legal issues. It is free for employees and members of their household and completely confidential. For 24/7 assistance, call 888-298-3907.

Note: Employees of the Administrative Office of the Courts use Deer Oaks and employees of the UNC System use ComPsych.

Employer-Based Options

Continued

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEAVE (CSL) - LITERACY, TUTORING AND MENTORING

The Office of State Human Resources has allowed a variance in the CSL – Literacy, Tutoring and Mentoring Policy, effective August 17 through December 31, 2020.

This and other types of CSL (see next pages) are available to permanent, probationary or time-limited employees and require pre-approval from the employee's supervisor.

CSL – LITERACY, TUTORING AND MENTORING

Available in lieu of regular CSL and provides up to 36 hours of paid leave for any employee for tutoring and mentoring a student in a public school or non-public school. Tutoring/mentoring shall be in a formal standardized program or a non-conventional tutoring/ mentoring arrangement to include plans and activities in the virtual academic setting.

The following terms apply for this purpose:

- "School" remains consistent with policy and recognizes the current virtual academic setting.
- "At-risk student" includes those who require temporary or ongoing support to succeed academically.

Employer-Based Options

Continued

REGULAR CSL

With exceptions as noted in policy, regular CSL provides up to the 24 hours of paid leave (effective August 17 through December 31, 2020.)

of paid leave to:

- Parents for involvement with their child in the schools;
- Any employee for volunteer activity in the schools;
- Any employee for volunteer activity in a not-for-profit Community Service Organization; or
- Any employee for volunteering in a State of North Carolina Public University, Community College System or State agency provided that the service is outside of the employee's normal scope of duties and responsibilities and that the employee is not receiving any form of compensation for the services rendered.

EXPANDED CSL FOR COVID-19 VOLUNTEERING

Throughout the pandemic, state employees have been provided opportunities to receive up to 80 hours of paid leave, with supervisory approval, by volunteering at a nonprofit that serves individuals impacted by the pandemic.

Employees wishing to use Expanded CSL who need help identifying a local nonprofit providing pandemic-related services are encouraged to visit the VolunteerNC.org website.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) requires certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19 employees with school-age children.

RESOURCES:

FFCRA FAQs from the U.S. Department of Labor

Eligibility Calculator: Determine an employee's eligibility for leave under FFCRA.

Below please find a few of the USDOL FAQs regarding FFCRA. For additional information on topics specific to your situation, please contact your Agency Human Resources Office.

Q: **My child's school or place of care has moved to online instruction or to another model in which children are expected or required to complete assignments at home. Is it considered to be "closed"?**

A: Yes. If the physical location where your child received instruction or care is now closed, the school or place of care is "closed" for purposes of paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave. This is true even if some or all instruction is being provided online or whether, through another format such as "distance learning," your child is still expected or required to complete assignments.

FFCRA

Continued

Below please find a few of the USDOL FAQs regarding FFCRA. For additional information on topics specific to your situation, please contact your Agency Human Resources Office.

Q: **What is a place of care?**

A: A place of care is a physical location in which care is provided for your child. The physical location does not have to be solely dedicated to such care. Examples include day care facilities, pre-schools, before- and after-school care programs, schools, homes, summer camps, summer enrichment programs, and respite care programs

Q: **Who is my child care provider?**

A: A child care provider is someone who cares for your child. This includes individuals paid to provide child care, like nannies, au pairs, and babysitters. It also includes individuals who provide child care at no cost and without a license on a regular basis; for

Q: **May I take expanded family and medical leave (EFML) to care for a child other than my child?**

A: No. Expanded family and medical leave is only available to care for your own son or daughter.

FFCRA

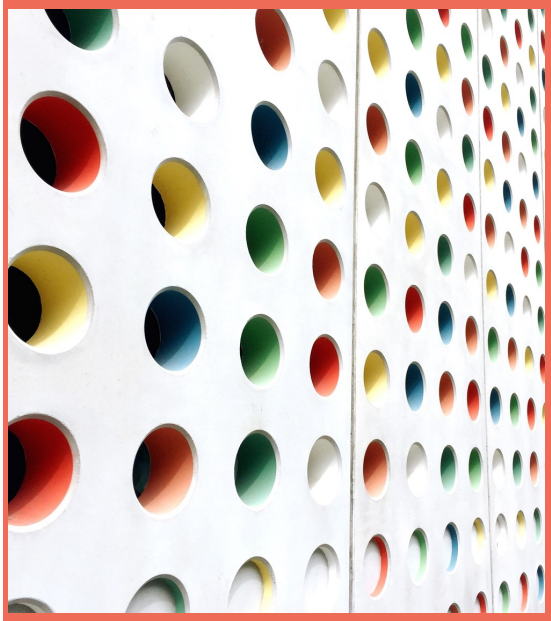
continued

Q: May I take paid sick leave to care for a child other than my child?

A: It depends. The paid sick leave that is provided under the FFCRA to care for one (or more) of your children when their place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) due to COVID-19 related reasons may be taken only to care for your own son or daughter.

However, paid sick leave is also available to care for an individual who is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to

COVID-19 or has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine due to concerns related to COVID-19. If you have a need to care for a child who meets these criteria, you may take paid sick leave if you are
unable to work or telework as a result of providing care. But in no event may your total paid sick leave for this purpose exceed two weeks.



State employees with school-age children who have questions about their specific leave situation are encouraged to contact their Agency Human Resources Office for guidance.

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