

Department of Accounts Payroll Bulletin

Calendar Year 2020

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the Payroll
Bulletin.....*

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The Payroll Bulletin is published periodically to provide CIPPS agencies guidance regarding Commonwealth payroll operations. If you have any questions about the bulletin, please send an email to payroll@doa.virginia.gov.

State Payroll Operations

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Special Pay Code for Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL)

Special Pay Code 065, PHEL

A new special pay code has been added for use by all agencies when making payments to employees, both salaried and wage, for time off related to illness or closings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The new special pay code is 065, Public Health Emergency Leave (Pub Hlth Emer - PHEL).

Please refer to DHRM Policy 4.52, Public Health Emergency Leave (COVID-19 Only) and the Policy Guide for details regarding proper use of this benefit. This policy remains subject to change. The most recent update was made to the limits, effective 03/26/2020.

Because there is no unique leave or expenditure code for this emergency, it is imperative that you use this pay code whenever making payments related to time off resulting from the current health emergency. Be sure that you include hours when entering the amount so that you can track compliance with the maximum number of hours available under this leave type. The same applies when paying hourly employees for time lost due to COVID-19. These hours count towards the 1500 annual maximum.

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Special Pay Code for Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL), cont.

Salaried Employees

PHEL is pro-rated for eligible, salaried employees based on FTE.

- Full-time, salaried employees: up to 160 hours total
 - Part-time, salaried employees: pro-rated based on FTE (50% salaried employee would be granted up to 80 hours)
 - Salaried employees working alternate schedules (e.g., four 10-hour days, 12-hour shifts, etc.) receiving PHEL are placed on a five day, 8-hours/day work schedule.
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Wage Employees

Eligible wage employees are to be awarded PHEL on a pro-rated basis determined by the average number of hours they typically work in a work week. Some wage employees work widely varying numbers of hours but most are scheduled and working a more consistent number of hours weekly. Line agencies will need to decide how to assess average number of hours worked by wage employees in order to allocate the PHEL

- Agencies must provide paid leave to wage and adjunct faculty for the COVID-19 event if qualifying conditions are met.
 - PHEL is awarded to eligible employees for a maximum of up to 4 weeks based on average number of hours worked. The maximum number of hours for which the employee will be eligible for PHEL will be the number of hours that is determined to be the average times 4 weeks. See example below.
 - Agencies have discretion to award the additional hours as needed. There is no need to contact DHRM for approval.
 - Hours of paid leave awarded to wage or adjunct faculty must be counted toward the 1500 hour threshold. Leave may not be awarded to employees once they reach 1500 hours.
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Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

The federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act takes effect on April 1. DHRM will provide additional guidance as soon as it is available.

Questions?

Please consult your agency HR staff if you have questions about whether or not employees are eligible for PHEL. As you can imagine, DHRM is inundated right now and trying to provide guidance as quickly as possible in an ever-changing situation.

Please do not hesitate to contact payroll@doa.virginia.gov if you have questions about paying eligible employees.

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Special Pay Code for Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL), cont.

Wage employee example:

Agency decides to use the most recently completed four-week period to determine average for a wage employee:

Week 1 = 20 hours worked
 Week 2 = 25 hours worked
 Week 3 = 30 hours worked
 Week 4 = 20 hours worked
 95 hours worked divided by 4 weeks = 23.8 hours/week average

Bi-weekly pay period beginning 03/13/2020 and ending 03/26/2020, workweek is Friday through Thursday.

Week 1:

03/13/2020	Friday	8 hours	Regular
03/14/2020	Saturday	8 hours	Regular
03/15/2020	Sunday	Off day	
03/16/2020	Monday	COVID-19 Closure, unable to telework	7.8 hours PHEL
03/17/2020	Tuesday		
03/18/2020	Wednesday		
03/19/2020	Thursday		

Week 2:

03/20/2020	Friday	COVID-19 Closure, unable to telework	23.8 hours PHEL
03/21/2020	Saturday		
03/22/2020	Sunday		
03/23/2020	Monday		
03/24/2020	Tuesday		
03/25/2020	Wednesday		
03/26/2020	Thursday		

Pay is processed for pay period ending 03/26:

16.0 hours regular pay
31.6 PHEL, Special Pay 065
 47.6 hours for the pay period

95.0 PHEL Available
-31.6 PHEL Used
 63.4 PHEL remaining

Suspension of Garnishments from US Department of Education

Wage Garnishment, Collections for Student Loan Borrowers Halted

On Thursday, March 26, the Director of the US Department of Education issued an announcement directing Federal Student Aid (FSA) to suspend wage garnishment, and collection actions for Student Loan borrowers. The suspension is currently effective March 13, 2020, through May 12, 2020.

This suspension affects all garnishments for student loan payments payable directly to the Department of Education, or through a company collecting the payment on their behalf, for a period of at least 60 days (through 05/12/2020).

Notifications and Refunds

US Department of Education will send out blanket notifications to all employers to suspend garnishment activity; **however, agencies that are able to identify garnishments from DOE or one of their collection agencies are authorized to suspend collection immediately.** DOE will monitor employer compliance and work with those who continue to send payments. *Enter a start date of 05/13/2020 for the garnishment deduction associated with these student loans on HOZDC to suspend collection.*

Do not process deduction refunds as DOE will issue refunds directly to the employees for funds withheld during this time.

Employee Questions

Borrowers with defaulted student loans, a current relationship with a private collection agency, and an interest in continuing a prior payment arrangement, consolidating their loans, or beginning a loan rehabilitation arrangement with their private collection agency, should contact the Department's Default Resolution Group at 1-800-621-3115 (TTY for the deaf or hearing-impaired 1-877-825-9923).
