

CalWORKs Cares - Grossmont College



What is CalWORKs Cares - CalWORKs Cares-Grossmont College is a response to Grossmont College's shift to remote/online learning in the wake of COVID-19, and our commitment to continue to serve and provide resources to our students.

This Week's Topic: EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING LEGISLATION/INFORMATION

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On Sunday, March 29th, 2020 President Trump extended the enforcement of "Social Distancing" until May 1st, 2020. Many of us had not heard the term "Social Distancing" before COVID-19, and now everyone has more than likely felt the impact of it. Collectively we are all feeling the impact of having to adjust to learning, teaching, and providing supportive services remotely. However, it often seems that with one change there are other changes that follow like a domino effect. It also seems that depending on how the big change is, the ones to follow are also comparable.

For many folks the first of the month is symbolic with paying bills, most notably rent. Then if not days before surely a few days after comes utilities and other expenses. Well, with the disruption of COVID-19 on every aspect of daily life, state and federal government legislation has been enacted in effort to keep the economy from bursting at its seams. This article will focus on legislation and information pertaining to housing, and employment in response to the current state of COVID-19.

NOTICE: The legislation and information in this article is reflective of the date the article was published. It is highly encouraged that you reference the sources cited for the most updated information at the time you're viewing the article.

EMPLOYMENT

Source: California Department of Industrial Relations

California Paid Sick Leave related to COVID-19 illness

The California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) states if an employee has paid sick leave available, "the employer must provide such leave and compensate the employee under California paid sick leave laws."

It's important to note that, the California DIR also permits for paid sick leave to be used for absences pertaining to "the diagnosis, care or treatment of an existing health condition or preventative care for the employee or the employee's family member."

The California DIR even outlines what can be considered preventive care, stating, "preventative care may include self-quarantine as a result of potential exposure to COVID-19 if quarantine is recommended by civil authorities. In addition, there may be other situations where an employee may exercise their right to take paid sick leave, or an employer may allow paid sick leave for preventative care. For example, where there has been exposure to COVID-19 or where the worker has traveled to a high risk area."

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Also, as it pertains to travel to “high risk areas” the California DIR outlines that, “employers can request that employees inform them if they are planning or have traveled to countries considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to be high-risk areas for exposure to the coronavirus.”

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

If you as the employee do not wish to exhaust your paid leave, the California DIR states, “the employer cannot require that the worker use paid sick leave; that is the worker’s choice.” However, if employee does decide to use their paid sick leave, an employer can “require they take a minimum of two hours of paid sick leave. The determination of how much paid sick leave will be used is up to the employee.”

My child’s school or daycare closed for reasons related to COVID-19.

The California DIR recommends you talk to your employer to discuss options, and see if there is paid sick leave or other paid leave available to you. According to the California DIR, “Employees at worksites with 25 or more employees may also be provided up to 40 hours of leave per year for specific school-related emergencies, such as the closure of a child’s school or daycare by civil authorities (see Labor Code section 230.8.)” However, it should be noted that whether the leave is paid or unpaid depends on your employer’s policy on paid leave, vacation, or paid time off (PTO). For example, employers can require their employees to use their vacation or PTO before they are able to take unpaid leave, “but cannot mandate that employees use paid sick leave.” Although, the California DIR also states that, “a parent may choose to use any available paid sick leave to be with their child as preventative care.”

If you’re fearful of retaliation for using your paid sick leave for school or daycare closures as a result of COVID-19, the Labor Commissioner’s Office enforces several laws. You can find additional information on how to file a retaliation or discrimination complaint by clicking the link below.

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/howtfileretaliationcomplaint.htm>

I do not have any paid sick leave left.

If you do not qualify for paid sick leave or have exhausted it, other leave such as vacation or PTO maybe available. The California DIR states, “an employee may choose to take such leave and be compensated provided that the terms of the vacation or paid time off policy allows for leave in this circumstance.”

I reported to work but I was sent home early.

If you find yourself in that situation the California DIR states, “if an employee reports for their regularly scheduled shift but is required to work fewer hours or is sent home, the employee must be compensated for at least two hours, or no more than four hours of reporting time pay.”

That’s kind of confusing, can you explain that with an example?

“For example, a worker who reports to work for an eight-hour shift and only works for one hour must receive four hours of pay, one for the hour worked and three as reporting time pay so that the worker receives pay for at least half of the expected eight-hour shift.” - The California Department of Industrial Relations

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There is additional information on the California DIR website, such as what compensation you are entitled as a salaried worker, as well as more information on reporting time during a state of emergency. Here is the link: <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.htm>

How to apply for unemployment:

https://www.edd.ca.gov/unemployment/filing_a_claim.htm

Check out the this USA Today article of companies hiring during COVID-19 outbreak:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2020/04/01/coronavirus-hiring-cvs-walmart-zoom-among-companies-seeking-workers/5097510002/>

HOUSING

Source: Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

On March 27th, 2020 California Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order prohibiting the enforcement of evictions for renters affected by COVID-19 through May 31st, 2020. This executive order prohibits landlords from evicting renters for an inability to pay.

IMPORTANT: The executive order requires tenants to “declare in writing, no more than seven days after the rent comes due, that the tenant cannot pay all or part of their rent due to COVID-19.” In addition, the Governor’s official website states, “the tenant would be required to retain documentation but not required to submit it to the landlord in advance. And the tenant would remain obligated to repay full rent in a timely manner and could still face eviction after the enforcement moratorium is lifted.”

Source:<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/27/governor-newsom-takes-executive-action-to-establish-a-statewide-moratorium-on-evictions/>

A note from the writer: While things have been operating differently due to the campus' and nation's response to COVID-19, my commitment to supporting and counseling Grossmont College students remains unwavering. Feel free to contact me haile.wright@gcccd.edu with questions, comments, or topics you would like to see in upcoming newsletters.