

Covid-19 Essential Workers Leave Support FAQs

Applying & reapplication

Q: Can I submit a new application if additional employees need the Leave Support who weren't included in my first application?

A: If you have additional employees who need to stay at home and you haven't applied for them yet, you can submit a new application at any time.

Q: Can I reapply for the same employee(s) at the end of four weeks?

A: Yes. You can re-apply for the same employee(s) as early as three weeks after the initial application date. To ensure that there are no gaps in payment, you should re-apply before the end of the four-week leave period.

Q: When does my employee's four-week period start?

A: The four-week period for the Leave Support starts from the date an application was submitted – please make sure to note this date in case you need to re-apply for someone.

Q: Which employees should I re-apply for?

A: You should have a conversation with each employee when you submit the initial application, and when it's time to re-apply. Some employees will only need the Leave Support for a short time, and you will only need to apply for those employees once. For other employees, an existing health concern will mean they need to stay at home longer.

Use of discretionary leave entitlements

Q: Does my employee have to have used all of their paid leave entitlements before I apply for the Essential Workers Leave Support on their behalf?

A: No – your employee isn't required to have used any or all of their paid leave entitlements before you apply for the Leave Support on their behalf. However, you can agree with your employee to use any form of paid leave entitlements to cover the period they cannot work.

Q: Can I ask my employee to take annual leave at this time?

A: Your obligations under employment law have not changed. You can agree with your employee when they should take annual leave. Where your employee does take annual leave, they should be paid their normal wage rate, for their normal hours of work.

Eligibility

Q: Who is in the impacted group of people that could apply for the Covid-19 Essential Workers Leave Support?

A: Employees who:

- are deemed '[higher risk](#)' to Covid-19 and Ministry of Health guidance recommend they remain at home for the duration while the public health restrictions are in place (and potentially longer); or

- have household members who are deemed '[higher risk](#)' to Covid-19 and Ministry of Health recommend the worker also remains at home to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to other household members; or
- have been in close contact with someone who has contracted Covid-19 and are required to remain at home for 14 days (as required by Ministry of Health guidelines); or
- are sick with Covid-19 and are required to remain off work until they are advised by a health professional that they can be released from isolation.

Paying your staff

Q: As an employer, if I receive the Covid-19 Essential Workers Leave Support, how much do I need to pay my employee(s)?

A: You can only reduce a person's hours in line with employment law obligations. If you are receiving the Essential Worker Leave Support on behalf of your employees, you must also try your hardest to pay the employees named in your application at least 80% of their usual wages. If that isn't possible, you need to pay at least the Leave Support rate (ie the full time or part time rate).

If an employee's usual wages are less than the Leave Support, you must pay them their usual wages. Any difference should be used to help pay any other affected worker's income.

Receiving multiple forms of assistance

Q: As an employer, I've already received the previous Leave Payment for an employee. Can I also apply for the Covid-19 Essential Workers Leave Support for the same person?

A: You can only receive the essential worker leave support once the 14 days has expired from the date of application for the previous leave scheme.

Q: As an employer, I've already received the Covid-19 Wage Subsidy for an employee. Can I also apply for the Essential Worker Leave Support?

A: No. You can only receive one type of payment for an employee – either the Wage Subsidy or the essential worker leave support.

Paying the money back

Q: If my employee voluntarily leaves during the four week period for another job opportunity or because they have caring responsibilities, do I have to pay the money back to MSD?

A: If an employee voluntarily leaves their employment, you must tell MSD. You cannot claim any other subsidy for that person and you do not need to return any of the subsidy already paid.

It is expected that the remainder of that person's subsidy is used to help any other affected worker's income where possible.

If you have no other staff to use the subsidy in relation to, you should notify MSD and return the money.

Q: If I make my employee redundant during the four week period, do I need to pay the money back to MSD?

A: Yes. You will have to pay the money back to MSD where you make an employee redundant.