

FAQ'S for HOURLY FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

What is leave of absence?

The Kroger Family of Companies has several types of leaves of absence available to hourly associates. We have short-term disability leave, Family Medical Leave, Military Leave, and Personal Leave. Short-term disability leave is for an associate's own personal medical condition, Family Medical Leave can be for either the associate's own personal medical condition or to care for an eligible member of an associate's immediate family. Military leave would be defined by active or reserve military orders. Personal leave would be at divisional discretion for a reason not defined by the three preceding leaves.

Who needs to know that an associate is pursuing a leave of absence?

The first notification of an impending leave of absence should be to the associate's immediate manager and/or Human Resources. The associate should keep close contact with his/her manager for scheduled appointment dates, etc. He/she should work closely with the manager for an impending return to work date to allow the manager to know when he/she might actually be returning to work.

What is Family Medical Leave (FML)?

Family Medical Leave is an unpaid Federal and Company benefit that offers job protection and continued benefits for a defined period of time based on Federal Law and employment criteria for all eligible associates. The eligibility will be determined by MetLife based on a combination of employment data sent to MetLife and the certification of the documentation received by a physician regarding the claim request. The leave can be for his/her own serious medical condition, which would likely cause the FML to run concurrent with the STD leave. FML may also be taken to care for an associate's spouse, domestic partner (same or opposite sex), child, and parent or, in the case of Military Caregiver Leave, "next of kin. Unpaid leave will be granted for a number of reasons, please see the company FML policy for the detailed reasons.

Who is covered for FML benefits?

All associates have potential eligibility for FML certification. The employment criteria for eligibility is one year of employment and an hours requirement of having been scheduled 1250 hours in the prior 52 weeks to initialization of the leave.

How long do the FML benefits last?

Continuous FML lasts for 12 weeks or up to 26 weeks for Military Caregiver Leave. Intermittent FML lasts for the total average number of hours that the associate was scheduled over the prior 52 weeks to initialization of leave multiplied by 12 weeks. This can be broken down to use incrementally in days.

Is there an elimination period?

The elimination period is three (3) days at the initialization of the leave.

Is there any pay while on FML?

FML is an unpaid leave. However, company policy is that paid time off (PTO) is used while the associate is on FML. All PTO, to include vacation (purchased and earned), personal holidays, sick days, and health and wellness days, with the exception of 5 days is to be used while the associate is out on FML. This applies to both continuous and intermittent. This may differ for associates under a collective bargaining agreement and/or subject to change based on federal/state guidelines.

When does an eligible hourly associate file for FML?

An FML claim should be filed with MetLife as soon as an associate knows that they will miss three (3) days. The associate can call MetLife as much as thirty (30) days early if the FML event is planned. In the event that the FML is unplanned, MetLife should be called as quickly as possible. In addition, his/her manager should be notified immediately that time will be missed and that a leave is impending. This can be as soon as day one away from work. The key is filing as soon as he/she knows that he/she will be off more than three (3) days.

What is involved in filing for FML?

The hourly associate will call MetLife intake at 1-888-343-6886 to initiate the leave. The associate will be asked a number of questions at intake, and the associate will be assigned a claim number from the initiation of the FML claim. A rights package, which includes the health care provider statement, will be mailed to the associate's home address. The paperwork in the rights package will have information that will need to be completed by both associate and physician. The paperwork will then be returned to MetLife for processing. Correspondence will be mailed to the associate to communicate approval/denial to the associate. If the claim is denied, the associate will be mailed a very detailed communication as to why the claim was denied. Human Resources will receive notice that the leave has been denied.

What happens if the claim is denied?

The hourly associate will have the right to appeal a denial of any claim. He/she will be given notice of appeal rights and the appeal process in the denial letter.

Could other benefits be affected by FML leaves?

No, other benefits should not be affected for leaves taken under stand-alone FML. Stand-alone FML is defined as a FML that does not run concurrent with a short term disability (STD) leave. The full 12 weeks of stand-alone FML can be taken only once per 52 week calendar year.

What will be needed for an associate to return to work?

The return to work date should be given to the associate's manager as quickly as it is known. The FML time should not exceed the 12 weeks, or 26 weeks in the case of the Military care giver.