

**Chapter 192-530 WAC
VOLUNTARY PLANS**

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-530-010 What are the employer application requirements for voluntary plans? (1) A voluntary plan application must be submitted to the department online or in another format approved by the department. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. Voluntary plan application fees are due at the time the application is submitted to the department. The fee is nonrefundable. If the voluntary plan is denied, a new application fee is required with each additional application.

(2) Voluntary plans will take effect on the first day of the quarter immediately following the approval of the plan.

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-530-020 Voluntary plans—Employer plan requirements.

(1) An employer's voluntary plan must:

(a) Allow the employee to take at least the same duration of leave from work as the state plan;

(b) Pay at least equivalent total monetary benefits as the state plan;

(c) Not withhold an amount from an employee's wages that is higher than what would be withheld under the state plan for the same period of time; and

(d) Offer leave for at least the same reasons as the state plan.

(2) An employer with an approved voluntary plan may, at its discretion, use an accelerated payment schedule. The total monetary benefit must be equal to or greater than what the employee would have received under the state plan.

(a) If the employer chooses to use an accelerated payment schedule, the total monetary benefit must be paid to the employee over a length of time that is no less than one-half of what would have been provided under the state plan.

(b) Whether an employer elects to use an accelerated payment schedule has no impact on the length of job-protected leave to which the employee is entitled.

(c) If an employer chooses to utilize an accelerated payment schedule and the employee agrees to return to work earlier than required, the employer cannot require the employee to repay benefits as a result of returning to work earlier.

(3) Employees covered by a voluntary plan are entitled to at least the same length of job-protected leave to which they would be entitled under the state plan. An employer and an employee may enter into an agreement wherein the employee returns to work at an earlier date.

Example: An employee elects to take 12 weeks of leave for the birth of a child. The weekly benefit amount is \$750. The employer decides to pay the employee \$1,500 weekly over 6 weeks. In addition, the employer and the employee agree that the employee will return to work after 6 weeks. In this example, the employee would still have been permitted to take the full 12 weeks of leave if the employee had decided to do so.

(4) A two hundred fifty dollar fee will be required for every new application or nonstatutorily required amendment filed by an employer seeking approval for a voluntary plan.

(5) If an employer elects to have a voluntary plan for either family leave or medical leave, but not both, the employer is responsible for withholding the employee share of the premium for the portion that is covered by the state plan. The department will post the rates for family and medical leave for the following calendar year to its web site by November 30th each year. The employer is responsible for paying the premiums due to the state plan in accordance with WAC 192-510-060.

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-530-030 Voluntary plans—Employee eligibility criteria.

(1) To qualify for an employer's approved voluntary plan, an employee must have been:

(a) In employment for at least eight hundred twenty hours during the qualifying period and in employment with that employer for at least three hundred forty hours; or

(b) Covered by an approved voluntary plan through their previous employer.

(2) Employees working for an employer with a voluntary plan who have not yet met eligibility requirements for that plan are eligible for benefits under the state plan so long as all other requirements are met.

(3) When an employee files a claim for benefits, an employer will access the employee's weekly benefit amount and typical workweek hours information online, or in another format approved by the department, and ensure the employee qualifies for at least an equivalent benefit amount from its voluntary plan.

(4) Upon hiring an employee previously covered under a state plan, the employer with an existing voluntary plan must report to the department online, or in another format approved by the department, the new employee's status for the voluntary plan after the employee becomes eligible for that plan.

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-530-040 Voluntary plans—Notice requirements under RCW 50A.04.075. (1) The department will provide a notice that meets the requirements of RCW 50A.04.075 to employers with approved voluntary plans if requested.

(2) Employers may create their own notices that meet the requirements of RCW 50A.04.075. Each employer must provide a copy of its voluntary plan notice to the department for approval. The notice must be submitted online or in another format approved by the department and must contain at least the same information as the state notice.

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-530-050 Avoiding a duplication of benefits under state and voluntary plans. (1) Employees cannot collect benefits from both the state plan and a voluntary plan for the same period. To ensure compliance, employers with an approved voluntary plan must report:

(a) All information required of employers by the state plan;

(b) Weekly benefit and leave duration information for any employee who takes leave under that plan for reasons that would have qualified for leave under the state plan; and

(c) Premiums, if any, withheld from employee wages.

(2) Upon request, the department will provide weekly benefit, typical workweek hours, and leave duration information to any employer with an approved voluntary plan that requests it for an employee who intends to take leave under that plan.

NEW SECTION

WAC 192-530-060 What happens at the end of a voluntary plan?

(1) If the employer chooses to withdraw from a voluntary plan, the employer must notify the department at least thirty calendar days before the withdrawal. Notification of withdrawal shall be submitted to the department online or in another format approved by the department.

(2) If the department has terminated an employer's participation in a voluntary plan, the department will calculate the amount owed by the employer and send an invoice for payment. The amount due will consist of all moneys in the plan, including premiums paid by the employer, premiums paid by the employees, moneys owed to the voluntary plan by the employer but not yet paid to the plan, and any interest accrued on all these moneys. The amount will be due immediately. Any balance owed will not start collecting interest until thirty calendar days after the date of the invoice.