

CHAPTER 839

DIVISION 9

EMPLOYEE LEAVE LAWS

Oregon Family Leave Act

839-009-0270

Job Protection

(1) An employer must restore an employee returning from OFLA leave, including intermittent and alternative duty leave, to the employee's former position if the job still exists, even if it has been filled during the employee's OFLA leave. The former position is the position held by the employee at the time OFLA leave began, regardless of whether the job has been renamed or reclassified. (For example, a delivery driver must be returned to the same route, at the same rate of pay and benefits, driving the same truck, delivering the same goods, on the same shift and working from the same location as when the driver started OFLA leave.)

(2) Any worker hired during an eligible employee's leave to perform the same work that the eligible employee performed before the leave was taken is a replacement worker. When the eligible employee notifies the employer that the employee is ready to return to work, the employer must give that employee the opportunity to work any hours that the replacement worker would otherwise have been scheduled to work.

(3) The employee is not entitled to return to the former position if the employee would have been bumped if OFLA leave had not been taken.

(4) If the position held by the employee at the time OFLA leave began has in fact been eliminated and not merely renamed or reclassified, the employer must restore the employee to any available, equivalent position.

(a) An available position is a position that is vacant or not permanently filled.

(b) An equivalent position is a position that is the same as the former position in as many aspects as possible. If an equivalent position is not available at the employee's former job site, the employee may be restored to an equivalent position within 20 miles of the former job site.

(5) Unless the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, other agreement or the employer's policy provide otherwise:

(a) An employee on OFLA leave does not accrue seniority, production bonuses or other non-health-related benefits that would accrue while the employee is working;

(b) Benefits an employee was entitled to prior to starting OFLA leave must be restored in full upon the employee's return to work. The benefits do not have to be restored, however, if such benefits have been eliminated or changed for similarly situated employees;

(c) An employee has no greater right to a job or other employment benefits than if the employee had not taken OFLA leave; and

(d) An employee is subject to layoff the same as similarly situated employees not taking OFLA leave.

(6) During any OFLA leave, an employer must maintain the employee's coverage under any group health plan on the same conditions as coverage would have been provided if the employee had been continuously employed during the entire leave period.

(a) An employer continuing health or other insurance coverage for an employee on OFLA leave may require that the employee pay only the same share of health or other insurance premium during the leave that the employee paid prior to the leave.

(b) If an employee cannot or will not pay such costs, the employer may elect to discontinue benefit coverage, unless to do so would render the employer unable to restore the employee to full benefit coverage. If coverage lapses because an employee has not made required premium payments, upon the employee's return from OFLA leave the employer must still restore the employee to coverage/benefits equivalent to those the employee would have had if leave had not been taken and the premium payment(s) had not been missed, including family or dependent coverage. In such case, an employee may not be required to meet any qualification requirements imposed by the plan, including any new preexisting condition waiting period, to wait for an open season, or to pass a medical examination to obtain reinstatement of coverage. If an employer terminates an employee's insurance in accordance with this section and fails to restore the employee's health insurance as required by this section upon the employee's return, the employer may be liable for benefits lost by reason of the violation, for other actual monetary losses sustained as a direct result of the violation, and for appropriate equitable relief tailored to the harm suffered.

(c) If the employer pays (directly or indirectly, voluntarily or as required by state or federal statute) any part of the employee's share of health or other insurance premium while an employee is on OFLA leave, the employer may deduct up to 10 percent of the employee's gross pay each pay period after the employee returns to work until the amount is repaid.

(d) If an employee fails to return to work — unless the failure to return to work is because of a serious health condition for which the employee would be entitled to OFLA leave or another circumstance beyond the employee's control — the employer may recover the employee's share of benefits paid by the employer. The employer may use any legal means to collect the amount owed for the employee's share of benefits paid by the employer, including deducting the amount from the employee's final paycheck.

(7) An employer may require an employee to follow the employer's established leave policy regarding periodic reporting to the employer of the employee's current status. Before restoring the employee to work after taking OFLA leave for the employee's own serious health condition, the employer may require the employee to present verification from the employee's health care provider that the employee is able to resume work, provided such requirement is applied pursuant to a uniformly applied practice or policy of the employer.

(a) Pursuant to ORS 659A.168(1), the employer is responsible for any co-pay or other out-of-pocket costs incurred by the employee in providing the verification.

(b) The employer may not require the employee to obtain a second opinion.

(8)(a) If an employee gives unequivocal notice of intent not to return to work from OFLA leave:

(b) The employee is entitled to complete the approved OFLA leave, providing that the original need for OFLA leave still exists. The employee remains entitled to all the rights and protections under OFLA, including but not limited to, the use of vacation, sick leave and health benefits pursuant to OAR 839-009-0270 and 839-009-0280, except that:

(A) The employer's obligations under OFLA to restore the employee's position and to restore benefits upon the completion of leave cease, except as required by federal COBRA law, 29 USC 1161 et seq.; and

(B) The employer is not required to hold a position vacant or available for the employee who gives unequivocal notice of intent not to return.

(9) An employer may not use the provisions of this section as a subterfuge to avoid the employer's responsibilities under OFLA.

Stat. Auth.: ORS 659A.805, OL Ch. 323, 2015

Stats. Implemented: ORS 659A.150 - 659A.186, OL Ch. 323, 2015