

Voluntary Furlough Program Frequently Asked Question (FAQ's)

Q1. Who is eligible to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program (VFP)?

A1. All regular County employees may request to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program. Temporary (TAP) and Per Diem employees may not participate in the program at this time.

Q2. What are the options under the Voluntary Furlough Programs?

A2. Employees may elect from two options under the Voluntary Furlough Programs. The options are:

Voluntary Furlough Program

There are two ways to participate in this program:

- 1) Reduction of scheduled workday or workweek (**Note: FLSA Exempt employees may only request full day absences**); or
- 2) Reduced block of time off (full week or full pay period)

Q3. Can an employee enroll in the Voluntary Furlough Program at any time?

A3. Yes. Participation in the program requires manager/supervisor approval prior to an employee being able to take time off.

Q4. Can employees work overtime in the same pay period in which they elect to Voluntary Furlough?

A4. Employees participating in the Voluntary Furlough Program should not work overtime in the week they furlough unless the Department Head deems overtime is necessary to meet business needs. Hours furloughed under the Voluntary Furlough Program are neither considered regular hours worked for the purposes of determining overtime nor are they counted towards eligibility for certain premium pay types.

Q5. What if a designated furlough day is the day before a holiday, after a holiday, or both?

A5. Employees will be eligible for the paid holiday, if they take Voluntary Furlough time off the day before a holiday, the day after a holiday, or both.

Q6. Will an employee be paid for the holiday if a County holiday falls within a Voluntary Furlough *scheduled block of time* that an employee has requested?

A6. Yes. If an employee has requested a scheduled block of time as Voluntary Furlough and a County Holiday falls on one or more of the scheduled Voluntary Furlough days, the employee will be paid for the holiday(s).

Q7. If participating in the Voluntary Furlough Program results in a reduction in childcare expenses, can an employee reduce their Flexible Spending Account (FSA) childcare election?

A7. Yes, the FSA election can be changed due to a change in work schedule, which is a qualifying reason allowed under the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Section 125 code. An employee may choose to make a change to their FSA election within 60 days of the change in schedule. The revised election will be effective the next payroll period after the FSA change request is received by Human Resources.

Q8. Will taking unpaid time off affect retirement credits?

A8. In most cases, taking unpaid time off will not affect an employee's pension benefit. However, it may affect pension service credit if an employee's retirement date is within twelve (12) months. It takes ten (10) months of full-time employment or 1,720 hours worked within a fiscal year (July-June) to earn one year of CalPERS service credit. Employees should be careful not to exceed two months of Voluntary Furlough within a fiscal

year. A furlough does not change pay rate. Employees contemplating retiring in CY 2020 or CY 2021, should consider the impact to their final compensation by taking furlough time.

Q9. Can an employee's Department cancel a Voluntary Furlough election due to work needs?

A9. Yes. Departments are encouraged to determine work needs before approving a Voluntary Furlough request. The Department Head has the authority to cancel the Voluntary Furlough agreement due to work needs, special or emergency situations at any time.

Q10. What and how should an employee request to reduce or cancel participation in the Voluntary Furlough Program?

A10. The employee must submit a request to reduce or cancel VFP participation directly to his/her manager/supervisor.

Q11. Will the Voluntary Furlough Program affect employees' benefits?

A11. In most cases, employees participating in the Voluntary Furlough Program will maintain their same level of County benefits while taking furlough. Since furlough time off reduces an employee's paycheck amount and Flexible Benefit Credits received may not be enough to cover the cost of all health premiums, not all benefit deductions may be taken, which could result in some premiums or deductions going into arrears. Unpaid premiums will be deducted from future payroll warrants until fully collected. In the case of a separation of employment following a furlough period, employees will be liable for full repayment of any unpaid health premiums.

Q12. How will an employee's pay be affected if they participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program?

A12. Participation in the Voluntary Furlough Program will reduce an employee's immediate take home pay, as Voluntary Furlough time is unpaid.

Q13. Can an employee's request to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program be denied?

A13. Yes, an employee's request may be denied due to departmental work needs.

Q14. Can an employee's Voluntary Furlough request be cancelled by the Department Head, if the employee elects or is required to take FMLA, CFRA, PDL and/or Military Leave, during a period that an employee has previously requested Furlough?

A14. Yes. A Voluntary Furlough will be suspended if an employee elects or is required to take FMLA, CFRA, PDL, and/or Military Leave during a scheduled Voluntary Furlough period.

Q15. Will an employee's position with the County be protected if they participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program?

A15. No. Although the County supports and appreciate employees volunteering to participate in the Furlough program, it does not exclude participating employees from future layoffs.