

Work Leave and Addiction Treatment

Planning treatment around work can be stressful. Find out which leave rules apply before relying on a verbal reassurance. You can start with questions about the process, documents and deadlines.

Keep completed notes private. Use short notes in each box; continue on another copy or separate paper when needed. Save the completed PDF on your device and reopen it to check your notes before closing.

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act can provide eligible employees of covered employers with unpaid, job-protected leave for qualifying serious health conditions. Treatment for a substance use disorder may qualify when the inpatient-care or continuing-treatment requirements are met. Eligibility and employer coverage are separate questions. [2] [1]

Treatment Leave Has Limits

Under Department of Labor guidance, FMLA leave for substance-use treatment must involve a health care provider, or a service provider referred by one. Absence because of substance use itself, rather than treatment, does not qualify on that basis. FMLA also does not cancel an employer's established, nondiscriminatory substance-use policy. [1]

Ask the Leave Administrator

Topic	Question
Eligibility	Am I eligible for FMLA, and is this employer covered? If not, which employer or state leave options can I ask about?
Schedule	Can the requested treatment schedule be accommodated as continuous, intermittent or reduced-schedule leave? What medical information is needed?
Pay and benefits	Is the leave unpaid? Can paid leave run at the same time, and what payments or benefits arrangements do I need to understand?
Documents	Which certification or forms are required, where do I send them securely, and when are they due?
Return to work	What notice or documentation will be required before I return? Who can answer if treatment dates change?

A Process-First Opening

"I need information about medical leave for treatment. Who administers requests, what forms and deadlines apply, and how should I submit medical information privately?"

Ask your treating clinician whether the treatment schedule and required certification can be documented. Ask the employer to explain the decision and any missing paperwork. A discussion with human resources is a step toward an answer; it is not itself confirmation that leave has been approved.

Work-Leave Planning Notes

Contact and rules to check

Leave administrator; employer policy; applicable leave program; where written guidance is kept.

Treatment schedule and required forms

Dates, appointment pattern, clinician contact, forms and deadlines.

Approval or unanswered questions

Record the written decision, pay/benefit arrangements and what still needs confirmation.

Sources and Further Reading

[1] US Department of Labor: FMLA Leave for Substance Abuse Treatment

<https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/fmla/10c9.aspx>

[2] US Department of Labor: Mental Health and the FMLA

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla/mental-health>