

# COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme

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*At the time of writing there is a community outbreak of COVID-19 in the Auckland region. Therefore, the situation is fast changing and we recommend that you check that the information below is still current before relying on it.*

The COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme (previously called 'COVID-19 Essential Workers Leave Support') is available for employers, including sole traders, to pay their employees who cannot work.

Changes were made to this scheme at 9am on 9 February 2021, meaning that the criteria have changed and are more narrow. If an employee needs to stay home while waiting on the results of a COVID-19 test, then they can now apply for the [Short-term Absence Payment](#) instead.

Support is available (under certain criteria) for employers to pay their employees in situations where employees need to stay away from work and cannot work from home. Employers can apply for support to pay employees. Those who are self-employed, or contractors, can apply directly.

Employers cannot apply for the COVID-19 Leave Support scheme and the COVID-19 Wage Subsidy scheme for the same employee at the same time.

The scheme is paid at the same rates as the Wage Subsidy scheme.

The scheme is administered by the Ministry of Social Development. Employers can apply on [the Work and Income website](#).

## Starting criteria for Employers

- You must be an eligible employer;
- Your business must be registered and operating in New Zealand;
- Your employees must be legally working in New Zealand; and
- You must have had a conversation with your employee.

## Additional criteria if you are applying after 9am on February 2021

Your employee (or a self-employed person) must be:

- sick with COVID-19 and must self-isolate until cleared by a doctor;
- identified as someone who has been in close contact and must self-isolate as advised through the National Contact Tracing process;
- the parent or caregiver of a dependant who has been told to self-isolate as advised through the National Contact Tracing process and the dependant needs support to do so safely;
- directed to self-isolate, or are a parent or caregiver of a dependant directed to self-isolate, by a Medical Officer of Health in accordance with the Health Act 1956;
- considered higher risk if they contract COVID-19 and they have been told to self-isolate by a doctor; or

- someone with household members who are considered higher risk if they contract COVID-19 and a doctor has recommended they self-isolate to avoid transmission to vulnerable household members.

**Additional criteria if you applied between 12pm on 28 September 2020 and 9am on 9 February 2021**

- Your employee must be unable to work because of one of the following:
  - They have been identified as someone who has, or may have been, in contact with someone who has COVID-19 and must self-isolate, including close or casual contacts.

**Additional criteria, if you applied between 1pm on 21 August 2020 and 12pm on 28 September 2020**

- Your employee must be unable to work because of one of the following:
  - They tested positive for COVID-19 and were required to self-isolate until cleared by a health professional;
  - They came into contact with someone who had COVID-19 and had to self-isolate;
  - They were at higher risk if they contracted COVID-19 according to Ministry of Health guidelines and were recommended to self-isolate; or
  - They had a household member at higher risk if they contracted COVID-19 according to Ministry of Health guidelines and were recommended to self-isolate to reduce risk.

**Additional criteria, if you applied before 1pm on 21 August 2020**

- Your business must have been financially impacted (30 per cent decline in revenue).

Further detail on these criteria can be found below.

***Financially impacted***

Anyone applying for the scheme before 1pm on 21 August 2020 must demonstrate a financial impact on their business. If you are applying after this time, then there is no requirement to demonstrate a financial impact.

Financially impacted means that an employer:

- has experienced a minimum 30 per cent decline in actual or predicted revenue over the period of a month when compared to the same month last year, due to the COVID-19 outbreak; or
- has reduced ability to support employees (who meet the criteria and need to take leave) owing to a negative impact from the COVID-19 public health restrictions.

***Conversation with your employees***

You must:

- discuss an application with your employees before making it;
- get their consent to the relevant points outlined in the declaration; and
- agree that they fall into one of the eligible groups.

You should have a conversation about how best to support your employee at this time. For example, they may choose to use existing sick or annual leave and you could use the subsidy to support paying that. If full paid leave options aren't available, the subsidy could be used to top up what is available.

### **Payment Rates**

The Leave Support Scheme will be paid at a flat rate of:

- \$585.80 for people who were working 20 hours or more per week (full-time rate); or
- \$350.00 for people who were working less than 20 hours per week (part-time rate).

The Leave Support Scheme is now paid as a lump sum and covers two weeks per eligible employee from the date you submit your application. You cannot apply for less than two weeks.

### **How to apply for the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme**

You can apply online – the various application forms are linked to [here](#). Which form you complete depends on whether you have employees or not.

As part of the application process you will be asked to declare that you meet the criteria and to agree to the obligations for the use of the Leave Support Scheme payment. All payments will be subject to audits and reviews. The declaration can be found [here](#).

### **Can you re-apply for the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme?**

If you have already applied for the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme for an employee, you can re-apply for that same person in the second week of the payment period. You can keep re-applying for the same employee as long as the payment is available and you meet the criteria.

### **See also:**

[Employment New Zealand: COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme.](#)