

Know Your Sick Leave Well

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With the flu season upon us, I know as a mother how kids getting sick can impact the entire family and the workplace. Sick kids often mean time off work because they are too ill to go to school or there is a risk of them sharing their germs.

A client of mine recently said she thought she got an additional 10 days off a year to care for her children. She thought it was in addition to her own entitlements.

This is not correct if you are relying on the National Employment Standards. Some employees are employed under other agreements that provide entitlements in addition to the NES, but this is not always the case.

The minimum that a full time employee is entitled to for “sick and carer’s leave” is 10 paid days per year. This leave is often called personal leave or carer’s leave and those 10 days must cover not only the employee’s days off because of illness or injury, but the days off to care for children or other family or household members suffering from illness or injury.

If the employee is part time, the number of days is pro-rata for the hours worked.

There are also further entitlements for an employee to take unpaid sick and carer’s leave, with two days permitted each time an immediate family member or household member needs care.

Sometimes, in cases of significant illness or injury the accumulated days simply won’t cover the required time off. In those cases, provided evidence can be given the employee is entitled to up to three months unpaid leave.

It is of course absolutely imperative that for an absence of this duration the employee has documentary evidence of the requirement to be away from work and indeed it is good practice (and often required by your employer) to always obtain a medical certificate either for yourself or the person you are caring for if you take any time off work.

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Elsbeth’s articles can be accessed on the Daily Mercury website at <http://www.dailymercury.com.au/topic/elsbeth-ledwy/> or you can find Elsbeth’s column “Mind Your Own Business” in the Daily Mercury newspaper each Wednesday.



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