



COUNTY OF
Riverside
HUMAN RESOURCES
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Voluntary Furlough
Frequently Asked Question (FAQ's)
(Revised August 25, 2009)

Q1. Who is eligible to participate in the Voluntary Furlough and Voluntary Contribution Furlough Programs?

A1. All regular County employees who have completed at least two pay periods of employment may request to participate in the programs. Seasonal, 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 have two options to elect under the Voluntary Furlough Programs. The options are:

A) Voluntary Furlough Program

There are two ways to participate in this program:

- 1) Reduce the number of hours in a scheduled workday or work week for a three month period or longer; or
- 2) Schedule a block of time off as unpaid leave (requires a minimum of two consecutive workdays off).

Note: FLSA exempt employees may not select the reduced workday option, but they may reduce their work week on a bi-weekly basis.

B) Voluntary Contribution Furlough Program

There are two ways to participate in this option:

- 1) Waive the County's contribution toward the Flexible Benefits Credit; or
- 2) Waive the County's contribution toward the County Car Allowance

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

A3. Yes. Approved requests for a three month period or more must be submitted to Human Resources by 5:00 p.m. on pay week Thursday to begin participation in the following pay period.

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

A4. Employees participating in the Voluntary Furlough 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 retention premiums.

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

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

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).

Example: An employee requests the week of November 9th through November 13th off as a scheduled Voluntary Furlough block of time. Since November 11th (County Holiday - Veteran's Day) falls within the employee's scheduled Voluntary Furlough block of time, the employee will be paid for the Holiday.

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

A7. Yes, the FSA election can be changed due to a change in work schedule, which is a qualifying reason allowed the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Section 125 code. An employee may chose 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, it will not affect employees pension benefit. However, it may affect credits if an employee's retirement date is within twelve months. It takes ten months of full-time employment or 1,720 hours worked within a fiscal year (July-June) to equal one year of CalPERS service credit, so an employee should be careful not to exceed two months of Voluntary and Mandatory Furlough within a fiscal year.

Additionally, when an employee applies for retirement, the final compensation is calculated based on the highest average annual compensation in a one (1) year period. Compensation earnable is comprised of basic pay rate and special compensation. A furlough does not change pay rate. However, a furlough could reduce special compensation amounts paid as a factor of earnings (e.g., Reporting the Value of Employer Paid Member Contributions). Therefore, in some cases final compensation could be reduced, but only for members with earnings-based special compensation whose highest one (1) year period at retirement includes furlough time.

Employees electing to retire in 2009 or 2010 should carefully consider which final compensation period they elect on their retirement application. Employees are able to verify CalPERS service credit or highest salary reported by contacting CalPERS at (888) 225-7377.

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

A9. 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.

Q10. What documentation is required if an employee requests to reduce or cancel their participation in the Voluntary Furlough due to personal hardship?

A10. All requests to reduce or cancel participation will be evaluated by the employee's Department on a case-by-case basis. Departments may require the employee to provide documentation of hardship based on the employee's specific situation.

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

A11. Employees participating in a Voluntary Furlough program will be allowed to maintain their same level of County benefit coverage prior to their furlough. Employees will continue to receive flexible benefit allowance, medical, dental, vision, and life insurance coverage during the furlough period.

If the furlough period is taken in excess of a full pay period, employees will be responsible for arranging payment(s) of the required employee contributions during the affected pay period(s). In the event payment arrangements are not established, unpaid premiums will be deducted from future payroll warrants until all

required premiums are collected. In the case of a separation or resignation following a furlough period, employees will be liable for full repayment of unpaid premiums.

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

A12. Participation in the Voluntary Contribution Furlough will reduce immediate take home pay.

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

A13. Yes, an employee's request may be denied due to departmental work needs, insufficient earnings to cover normal payroll deductions, the employee has not been employed for at least two full pay periods, or the employee is not in a paid status at the time of enrollment and on the workday prior to the first day of taking time off for the Voluntary Furlough.

Q14. Can an employee request to take a Voluntary Furlough in lieu of taking FMLA/CFRA/PDL?

A14. No. An employee may not substitute Voluntary Furlough for FMLA/CFRA/PDL.

Q15. 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?

A15. 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.

Q16. Will employees receive credit for Voluntary Furloughs when the County moves to Mandatory Furlough?

A16. Yes, County employees covered by the Management Resolution and represented by SEIU who elect to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program will receive credit for time previously taken.

Example: Justin elected to participate in the Voluntary Furlough Program. Justin elected to take two days off during the month of March in anticipation of a Mandatory Furlough. On August 1, Justin was informed by his Department Head, that his department will be closed on Fridays as a result of the Mandatory Furlough. Since Justin has credit for two days of Voluntary Furlough, he would be allowed to:

- 1) Make alternative work arrangements with the Agency or Department Head for 16 hours during the weeks of the Friday closure; or
- 2) Use leave balances (e.g. vacation, compensatory time, holiday banked leave) to cover part of the period of the closure based on credit received from the Voluntary Furlough period; or
- 3) Participate in the Mandatory Furlough period without pay.

Voluntary Furlough credit earned from the Flexible Benefit Contribution or the County Car Allowance options will be converted to hours of credit based on the conversion formula:

$$\text{Conversion Formula} = \frac{\text{Employee's Bi-weekly Flexible Benefit Contribution}}{\text{Employee's Hourly Rate}}$$

or

$$\frac{\text{Employee's Bi-weekly Car Allowance}}{\text{Employee's Hourly Rate}}$$

Q17. Will an employee's position with the County be protected if they participate in the Voluntary Furlough and Contribution Programs?

A17. No. Although participation in the Furlough program will assist with the overall wage obligations of the County, it does not exclude participating employees from future layoffs.