
NEWS & EVENTS

The ABC's Of Back-To-School For Minnesota Employers

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With the kick-off of the State Fair and store shelves lined with back-to-school supplies, families are putting away their flip-flops and summer schedules for a more regular routine. With this change in routine, it is a great time for employers to review Minnesota legal requirements relating to employees with school-age children.

All Minnesota employers are required to allow each employee to use 16 hours of unpaid leave each year to attend school conferences and other education-related activities for their children, if those activities cannot be attended during non-work hours. This time off can be unpaid, although employees must be allowed to use their accrued paid vacation time if they wish. Employees also have obligations when requesting time off for such activities. They should schedule such activities for non-work time if they are able. And, if at all possible, they should provide reasonable notice to the employer that they will need the time off and attempt to schedule the activity so it does not unnecessarily disrupt the employer's operations. It should be noted that this law, known as the School Conference and Activities law, also applies to foster children and to educational activities in child care settings.

Minnesota employees also have the right to use their sick leave benefits to care for their child who is sick or injured; these rights, however, are more limited. Unlike the School Conference and Activities law, the Sick or Injured Child Care law only applies to companies with 21 or more employees. Moreover, employees are only entitled to this benefit if they have worked for the company on at least a half-time basis for 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the leave, and if the employee has accrued sick leave benefits. If these qualifications are met, then the employer must allow employees to use those sick leave benefits to care for their sick or injured children.

It should be noted that there are a great many other laws and regulations that can come into play when an employee requests time off. As such, it is important to consult with a human resources professional or attorney to address any questions raised by a specific situation. As we head into fall, though, it's helpful to brush up on the rules that will apply to employees with children.

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