



A Guide for Employers on

Bereavement Leave

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PENINSULA



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Introduction

This employer guide explores the basics of bereavement leave to help you avoid common pitfalls. Whether your organization is big or small, a long-established firm or a start-up, managing leaves of absence in the workplace will help support your business growth and a strong organizational culture.

It is important to understand what rights your employees have and how to establish an appropriate bereavement leave policy that reflects your business practices.

How can you manage employee absence while maintaining employee job satisfaction and morale? Use this resource guide to gain a better understanding of Alberta's employment legislation around bereavement leave and adopt our HR best practices for your business.

As an employer in Alberta, you must provide up to 3 full days of unpaid, job-protected bereavement leave per calendar year to each employee upon the death of certain family members.

Understanding Bereavement Leave

Under the Alberta Employment Standards Code (ESC), all employees, regardless of the size of the business they work for and whether they work full-time or part-time hours, who have been employed for at least 90 days are entitled to 3 unpaid bereavement days every calendar year. Bereavement leave can be taken upon the death of certain family members.

Employees must give their employer reasonable notice before taking bereavement leave.

What family members are covered by bereavement leave?

Employees can take bereavement leave for the following family members:

- Their spouse, adult interdependent partner, or common-law partner
- Their or their partner/spouse's parent, step-parent, current/former foster parent, or current/former guardian
- Their or their partner/spouse's child, step-child, current/former foster child, or current/former ward
- Their or their partner/spouse's grandparent or step-grandparent
- Their or their partner/spouse's grandchild or step-grandchild

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- Their or their partner/spouse's siblings, half siblings, or step-siblings
- Their or their partner/spouse's aunt, uncle, step-aunt, or step-uncle
- Their or their partner/spouse's niece or nephew
- A person they are not related to but who they consider to be like a close relative

What Evidence Can an Employer Request?

While a medical certificate or other documentation is not required by legislation, employers can establish their own policies for documentation.

Do you have a bereavement leave policy in place?

Managing bereavement leave starts with proper workplace policies. Establishing a bereavement leave policy is key to effective absence management. You can set these expectations in your employment agreement or employee handbook.

To prepare an effective bereavement leave policy, consider these 4 HR best practices:

- Review the Employment Standards Code to ensure you meet the minimum requirements.
- Be transparent about time off and whether you provide pay during a bereavement leave.
- Outline arrangements and procedures for recording absences.
- Include information on support and assistance for employees who are returning from bereavement.

Learn more

If you have questions about the Ministry of Labour or the Employment Standards Code, call Peninsula today. We are dedicated to providing small business owners with HR support.

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We've got you covered.



Employer FAQs

What are employers asking about bereavement leave?

1. **What is the definition of bereavement leave?**

Bereavement leave is job-protected leave that gives employees the right to take time off due to the death of certain family members.

2. **How many bereavement leave days can an employee take?**

Employees are entitled to 3 days of unpaid bereavement leave.

3. **Do employers pay for bereavement leave?**

No. All bereavement leave days are unpaid.

4. **Can an employee take bereavement leave for someone who is not a family member?**

Yes, but only if it is someone who the employee considers to be like a close relative.

5. **Do employees need to request bereavement leave from their employer?**

Yes. Employees must tell their employers if they are taking bereavement leave before or right after they start.

6. **Can employers ask for proof of bereavement leave?**

Yes. While a medical certificate or other documentation is not required by legislation, employers can establish their own policies for documentation.

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