



# How do I take paid family leave to bond with my new child?

**Paid Family and Medical Leave, or PFML, is a benefit program for Massachusetts employees offered by the Commonwealth. If you are a new mother, father, or legal guardian, PFML lets you take paid family leave to bond with a child during the first 12 months after the child’s birth, adoption, or foster care placement.**

## When can I take paid family leave?

**If you have welcomed a new child or if you’re expecting to welcome a new child soon, you can apply for paid family leave.**

- Leave may be taken at any time before the child’s first birthday or the first anniversary of their adoption or foster care placement.

If you qualify to take more than one kind of leave in a benefit year, the maximum amount of combined paid leave you can take is 26 weeks.

## Length of benefit

**Each parent or legal guardian can take up to 12 weeks of family leave per year to bond with a child.**

- You and your partner may choose to take family leave to bond with the child at the same time, or each at a different time.
- You can take paid leave up to one year after you welcome a child into your family. After the first year, you will no longer be eligible for leave.

- 12 weeks is the maximum family leave to bond with a child you can take in a single year, no matter how many childbirths, adoptions, or foster care placements you have in the same year. These 12 weeks can be taken all at once or across multiple leaves for multiple children.

For expectant birth parents – you may be eligible to take both pregnancy-related medical leave and family leave to bond with a child.

Only the child’s parents or legal guardians are eligible to take family leave to bond with a child.

Learn more at: [mass.gov/family-leave-bonding](https://mass.gov/family-leave-bonding)

- For family leave to bond with a child, if you and your employer agree on a schedule, you may be able to take the leave intermittently.

*NOTE: Intermittent leave schedules are subject to approval from your employer.*



## Required documents

### For all family leave applications to bond with a child you will need to:

1. Notify your employer 30 days in advance if possible.
2. Complete an application online at [paidleave.mass.gov](https://paidleave.mass.gov) or over the phone at (833) 344-7365.
3. Provide proof of your [identity](#).
4. Provide proof of your child's birth or placement.

As a parent or legal guardian, you can apply for family leave before your child is born using your child's expected due date. You can also apply for family leave before the child has been adopted or placed in your home for foster care.

After your child's birth or placement, you'll need to provide the Department of Family and Medical Leave (DFML) with proof of the child's birth or placement before benefits will be paid.

### For a child's birth, you will need to submit any one of these four documents as proof:

- A copy of the child's Birth Certificate
- A signed and dated statement from the child's health care provider stating child's date of birth
- A signed and dated statement from the mother's health care provider stating child's date of birth
- A hospital statement of birth records

### For a child who has been recently adopted or placed in your home for foster care, you will need any one of these three documents as proof:

- A signed and dated document from the child's health care provider confirming child's placement and date of placement
- A certificate from the foster care or adoption agency confirming placement and the date of the child's placement
- A signed statement from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) confirming placement and date of placement

## Prepare to apply: 3 possible scenarios

Visit [paidleave.mass.gov](https://paidleave.mass.gov) and have your required documentation ready. You may apply online or by calling the contact center. We encourage you to apply online because the process will be easier for you, both in terms of submitting documentation and receiving notifications from DFML. If you apply online through the website you will be able to upload documentation directly online. If you apply over the phone, you will be required to physically mail or fax in your documentation.

Depending on the situation, an expectant mother might also be eligible to take medical leave during or directly after her pregnancy. If she does, she can transition directly into family leave to bond with a child after the child's birth if she wants to, or she can wait to take family leave to bond with a child some other time within the next 12 months as long as it is completed no later than the day **before** the child's first birthday. [In this scenario, be sure to apply for medical leave first, then family leave to bond with a child.](#)

Visit [mass.gov/dfml](https://mass.gov/dfml) for more information on medical leave. More specifics on each type of scenario are below.

### Scenario 1: Pre-natal or pre-placement:

Massachusetts allows employees to apply *before* your child is born or placed in the home. You may apply in this manner up until the date of birth or placement. To apply, follow the steps below:

- Begin filing a claim online or through the contact center.
- Provide proof of your identity.
- Provide an estimated date of when the leave will need to be taken – this can be the projected date of your child’s birth or placement, or any time up to a year after that.
- Provide proof of birth or placement to DFML once the child has been born or placed in the home so that the claim can be approved, and benefits can be paid out.

### Scenario 2: Post-natal or post-placement:

This scenario applies to any parent or legal guardian that has a child who has already been born or placed in their home in the past 12 months. To apply, follow the steps below:

- Begin filing a claim online or through the contact center.
- Provide proof of your identity.
- Provide proof of your child’s birth or placement.

### Scenario 3: Pregnancy-related medical leave into family leave to bond with a child:

If you are a mother that needs to take medical leave for a serious health condition related to pregnancy, or recovery from birth, which will then transition into family leave to bond with a child, this scenario is for you. This can be taken either before or after the birth of your child depending on your medical needs. To apply, follow these steps:

- Begin a claim for **medical leave** first online or through the contact center and answer “Yes” to the question, “Is this related to pregnancy?” This will automatically

create a subcase for your future family leave to bond with a child.

- Provide proof of your identity.
- Complete the Certification of Your Serious Health Condition form: [mass.gov/medical-leave-form](https://mass.gov/medical-leave-form)

*NOTE: It is up to your health care provider to decide how much time you will be able to take for your medical leave for a condition related to pregnancy or for recovery from birth.*

- Once your case has been approved, call the contact center at (833) 344-7365 to claim the family leave to bond with a child associated with your medical leave. This will ensure there is no disruption in your benefits payments and allow you to transition directly into family leave to bond with a child when your medical leave is complete.
- If your baby has already been delivered, you can submit the proof of your child’s birth online at this time.
- If your baby has not been delivered yet, provide your estimated delivery date and provide proof of birth once the child has been born.

*Your employer may have set up their own paid family and medical leave benefit through a private insurer. Please consult your supervisor or HR department for more information. Please note that private paid family and medical leave benefits need to match or surpass what is being offered by MA PFML.*

Call the Contact Center at (833) 344-7365 between the hours of 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Ask your employer or visit [mass.gov/dfml](https://mass.gov/dfml) to learn more.