

FMLA Updates

by Vicki Kintzer

There are many things changing in the world of FMLA. Verizon is changing the way they administer FMLA so you need to make sure you understand the changes that took effect the beginning of May.

A) When you report your absences you should either be referring them as a NEW request or related to a case number or previous absence date.

B) Once the absence is reported, if it was NEW, ARC will send you a letter stating you are eligible and that you have a deadline date to submit forms. ARC will NO LONGER be including a certification form. Therefore, make sure you HAVE a blank copy of the form at home so you can take it with you to the doctor's office. Forms can be obtained on the VZ eweb site. Go to "About you" and follow the work life tabs or ASK the supervisor for a blank copy.

C) It is YOUR responsibility to fax the forms back to ARC and make sure you get a FAX TRANSMITTAL showing the number of pages, etc., for the transmission as your proof of faxing. We all know ARC loses everything and that's your only proof. If you allow your doctor to fax on your behalf, make sure they note in your chart the date/time the form was faxed for they will need to provide you with that notice on any denials for non receipts of paperwork.

The 1 877-275-8947 Helpline number information is also changing. ARC's reps will no longer provide you with:

- 1- your hours worked
- 2- your FMLA time used
- 3- copies of any correspondence
- 4- copies of blank forms

This information will be provided by the department supervisor or the person assigned to FMLA in your department.

Facts you need to know:

FMLA time is NON PAID leave of absence time. The only reason you get paid is there is a contractual agreement between CWA and Verizon as to what you are paid for. Sickness time is paid according to your contract agreement for the first seven days of your sickness. After the 7th calendar day, you will fall into the short term disability plan and you are required to notify MetLife @ 800 638-4228 to open a claim.

Time off the job for physical therapy, x-rays, MRI's and doctor visits are not paid under our contract. You can use FMLA to be excused for the treatment, but you are not entitled to be paid for that time off.

Medical release forms You do NOT have to sign any medical release form of Verizon's, MetLife or FMLA. The only person who needs a medical release is the doctor who holds your medical files. Make sure your OWN doctor has a medical release from you, but there is no reason for you to sign the FMLA form, nor the MetLife form for disability or restriction cases.

FMLA subsequent absences:

If you have an absence for which your doctor is authorizing intermittent future absences, make sure the supervisor is reporting the subsequent absence dates as "related" to the original absence date until you get approved and get a case number. Once you have a case number, you refer to that case number. NO MEDICAL INFORMATION is to be shared/given to the supervisor regarding your reason for being out of work. Until you have an approved case number, any subsequent absences, ARC will expect you to send in paperwork for each absence separately. Your doctor, I'm sure, isn't going to fill out 5-10 forms until Verizon gets around to reviewing your original paperwork. THEREFORE: For subsequent absences, follow this procedure to cover them:

* 1 report the absence as "related" to the original date of your certification

* 2 write a note to ARC stating: Your absence for X date is related to absence Z date and your doctor authorized you for intermittent absences as listed on the certification form you faxed on _____ date. You are faxing this same certification

form and ARC should use this form for the X absence date as well. Keep the transmittal copy of the 5 pages (note + 4 page CF) and that should cover the absence time line.

* 3 until you are approved and get a case number to reference, repeat the "related to absence date" and repeat the note for each subsequent absence followed by the repeat of faxing the original certification form.

MOST IMPORTANT: Don't guess at things. Call with any questions. Once you guess and if you have filed an admin review and it comes back in final denial, it's hard to get those fixed. I get frustrated when I can't help you after the fact when I know I could have if you'd contacted me before doing anything. I am always here to help with getting forms filled out, helping with any denials, etc.

Make sure you are calling MetLife by the 7th calendar day if you continue to be out of work. You can pull the attending provider's statement off the Verizon eweb so you can take that with you to the doctor's and have that faxed to MetLife ASAP after the claim is initiated. Verizon instructs Met to close the claim if there is no medical received by day 3 after the claim is initiated. That doesn't give any time for the doctor to respond and your pay is jeopardized. Make sure your doctor responds timely to MetLife.

Paula Terveer is CWA liaison for these issues and she can be reached @ 888 571-7218