

the time or travel costs spent in acquiring the certification.

(e) The notice that employers are required to give to each employee giving notice of the need for FMLA leave regarding their FMLA rights and obligations (see § 825.301) shall advise the employee if the employer will require fitness-for-duty certification to return to work. If the employer has a handbook explaining employment policies and benefits, the handbook should explain the employer's general policy regarding any requirement for fitness-for-duty certification to return to work. Specific notice shall also be given to any employee from whom fitness-for-duty certification will be required either at the time notice of the need for leave is given or immediately after leave commences and the employer is advised of the medical circumstances requiring the leave, unless the employee's condition changes from one that did not previously require certification pursuant to the employer's practice or policy. No second or third fitness-for-duty certification may be required.

(f) An employer may delay restoration to employment until an employee submits a required fitness-for-duty certification unless the employer has failed to provide the notices required in paragraph (c) of this section.

(g) An employer is not entitled to certification of fitness to return to duty when the employee takes intermittent leave as described in § 825.203.

(h) When an employee is unable to return to work after FMLA leave because of the continuation, recurrence, or onset of the employee's or family member's serious health condition, thereby preventing the employer from recovering its share of health benefit premium payments made on the employee's behalf during a period of unpaid FMLA leave, the employer may require medical certification of the employee's or the family member's serious health condition. (See § 825.213(a)(3).) The cost of the certification shall be borne by the employee and the employee is not entitled to be paid for the time or travel costs spent in acquiring the certification.

**§ 825.311 What happens if an employee fails to satisfy the medical certification and/or recertification requirements?**

(a) In the case of foreseeable leave, an employer may delay the taking of FMLA leave to an employee who fails to provide timely certification after being requested by the employer to furnish such certification (i.e., within 15 calendar days, if practicable), until the required certification is provided.

(b) When the need for leave is not foreseeable, or in the case of recertification, an employee must provide certification (or recertification) within the time frame requested by the employer (which must allow at least 15 days after the employer's request) or as soon as reasonably possible under the particular facts and circumstances. In the case of a medical emergency, it may not be practicable for an employee to provide the required certification within 15 calendar days. If an employee fails to provide a medical certification within a reasonable time under the pertinent circumstances, the employer may delay the employee's continuation of FMLA leave. If the employee never produces the certification, the leave is not FMLA leave.

(c) When requested by the employer pursuant to a uniformly applied policy for similarly-situated employees, the employee must provide medical certification at the time the employee seeks reinstatement at the end of FMLA leave taken for the employee's serious health condition, that the employee is fit for duty and able to return to work (see § 825.310(a)) if the employer has provided the required notice (see § 825.301(c)); the employer may delay restoration until the certification is provided. In this situation, unless the employee provides either a fitness-for-duty certification or a new medical certification for a serious health condition at the time FMLA leave is concluded, the employee may be terminated. See also § 825.213(a)(3).

**§ 825.312 Under what circumstances may a covered employer refuse to provide FMLA leave or reinstatement to eligible employees?**

(a) If an employee fails to give timely advance notice when the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, the employer may delay the taking of FMLA leave until 30 days after the date the employee provides notice to the employer of the need for FMLA leave. (See § 825.302.)

(b) If an employee fails to provide in a timely manner a requested medical certification to substantiate the need for FMLA leave due to a serious health condition, an employer may delay continuation of FMLA leave until an employee submits the certificate. (See §§ 825.305 and 825.310.) If the employee never produces the certification, the leave is not FMLA leave.

(c) If an employee fails to provide a requested fitness-for-duty certification to return to work, an employer may delay restoration until the employee

submits the certificate. (See §§ 825.309 and 825.310.)

(d) An employee has no greater right to reinstatement or to other benefits and conditions of employment than if the employee had been continuously employed during the FMLA leave period. Thus, an employee's rights to continued leave, maintenance of health benefits, and restoration cease under FMLA if and when the employment relationship terminates (e.g., layoff), unless that relationship continues, for example, by the employee remaining on *paid* FMLA leave. If the employee is recalled or otherwise re-employed, an eligible employee is immediately entitled to further FMLA leave for an FMLA-qualifying reason. An employer must be able to show, when an employee requests restoration, that the employee would not otherwise have been employed if leave had not been taken in order to deny restoration to employment. (See § 825.216.)

(e) An employer may require an employee on FMLA leave to report periodically on the employee's status and intention to return to work. (See § 825.309.) If an employee unequivocally advises the employer either before or during the taking of leave that the employee does not intend to return to work, and the employment relationship is terminated, the employee's entitlement to continued leave, maintenance of health benefits, and restoration ceases unless the employment relationship continues, for example, by the employee remaining on *paid* leave. An employee may not be required to take more leave than necessary to address the circumstances for which leave was taken. If the employee is able to return to work earlier than anticipated, the employee shall provide the employer two business days notice where feasible; the employer is required to restore the employee once such notice is given, or where such prior notice was not feasible.

(f) An employer may deny restoration to employment, but not the taking of FMLA leave and the maintenance of health benefits, to an eligible employee only under the terms of the "key employee" exemption. Denial of reinstatement must be necessary to prevent "substantial and grievous economic injury" to the employer's operations. The employer must notify the employee of the employee's status as a "key employee" and of the employer's intent to deny reinstatement on that basis when the employer makes these determinations. If leave has started, the employee must be given a reasonable