Understanding HR Policies: Compassionate Care



What is compassionate care leave and how does it impact your business?

It’s hard when employees become seriously ill and need leave to deal with health issues.But it may be even harder for employees when the seriously ill person is a spouse, child, parent or other close family member.

Until fairly recently employees didn’t have the legal right to take leave in order to care or provide support for a seriously ill family member. Instead, they had to either quit their jobs or
hire outsiders to care for their loved ones.

That’s where compassionate care leave comes in. As Michael De Jong, BC MLA said when compassionate care leave was introduced in BC, “Workers… should not have to choose between their job and caring for their family during a serious medical crisis.” So in January 2004, the federal government gave employees for federally regulated employers the right to compassionate care leave. And the provinces and territories soon followed suit.

But because compassionate care leave is a fairly recent phenomenon, many employers are not familiar with its requirements or know how to handle requests for such leave. We’ll explain the law on compassionate care leave. We’ll also give you a checklist of questions to ask when an employee requests such leave.