

# PUBLICATION

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## What You Need to Know About Georgia's New Family Care Act – Effective July 1

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**On May 8, Governor Nathan Deal signed Georgia's new Family Care Act into law. The Act, which will take effect on July 1, requires employers to allow their employees to use earned and available sick leave to take care of immediate family members. "Immediate family member" is defined under the Act as an employee's spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent or any dependent listed on the employee's last tax return.**

On its face, the Act significantly limits its own applicability. First, an employee must work at least 30 hours a week to take advantage of the Act's benefits. Second, the Act only applies to employers with 25 or more employees. Third, it does not require employers to offer sick leave or to allow an employee to use more than five days of sick leave per calendar year to care for an immediate family member.

Interestingly, the Act explicitly states that it does not create a new cause of action against an employer, and therefore, it is unclear what actual effect the Act will have on Georgia workplaces. However, if a covered employer offers sick leave, it should be prepared to allow its employees to use at least five days of earned and available sick leave to care for immediate family members. An employee using his/her sick leave in this manner is still required to comply with the employer's sick leave protocol. Covered employers should also update their sick leave policy to reflect the requirements of the Act.