

## **American Rescue Plan: COVID-19 Emergency Paid Leave (EPL) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from WebEx Sessions on May 13, 2021**

These Q&As should be read in conjunction with the below information:

- User Group memo dated May 5, 2021, subject American Rescue Plan Act - Emergency Paid Leave (EPL) Interim Solution <https://www3.abc.doi.gov/HRD/UG-Message/american-rescue-plan-act-emergency-paid-leave-epl-interim-solution>
- **Where can we find the IBC communications sent out?**
  - User Group Announcements Memo Archive:  
<https://abc.doi.gov/HRD/PayrollAnnouncements>
- Along with the official guidance issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as of April 29, 2021
  - The links are included in our memo dated May 5, 2021

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**FAQ categories of questions are in the following order:**

- General
- General interim solution usage to include
  - General
  - OBIEE
- Implementation of Enhancement of EPL
- Limits
- EPL Effect on Retirement
- SF-1150s
- Agency Requirements
- OPM Reimbursement Fund

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### ***General Questions:***

**EPL 8-hour increment questions:**

1. **Do we have anything official that tells us that the EPL must be used in 8-hour increments?**
2. **To confirm, a workday cannot be mixed with EPL and any other accrued leave (e.g.: 4 hours EPL + 4 hours Sick Leave)?**
3. **If an employee has to use 8 hours of EPL a day (or 9/10) depending on tour, how can they substitute 2 hours of another leave on the same day?**
4. **Was it stated that leave would be charged in 1 hour increments?**

5. **If an employee is on a compressed work schedule (e.g. 5/4/9 or 4/10 schedule) and plans to use EPL, will they be converted to an 8-hour work schedule?**
  6. **If the EPL must be used in day increments except where it exceeds the biweekly dollar amount, what if someone gets a vax in the morning and then after lunch starts feeling side effects and takes the rest of the day off - are you saying that person can't claim 4 hours of EPL for that?**
- After confirmation of the act, we confirmed that employees can use EPL in fraction hours, such as 1/10th or 1/4th of an hour.

**Are FICA only or When Actually Employed (WAE) employees entitled to EPL?**

- An employee must be in a leave accruing status to be entitled to use EPL. If the employee is in a position that does not accrue annual or sick leave, they cannot use EPL.

**What if an employee leaves the agency with a debt?**

- The debt will be treated like any other debt when the employee leaves the agency.
- We will attempt to collect from any final pay (if agency notifies payroll of last paycheck) and from an employee's Lump Sum Payments (if applicable).
- Any remaining balance owed will be transferred to the agency's finance office.

**Is it possible that the agency is made aware of the debt at the same time or before the employees are notified?**

- We are unable to notify the agency when debts are created for employees.
- The agencies finance offices have access to special debt record reports in Datamart.
- The reports will not specifically tell the agency the type of debt the employee has, and the reports are updated twice a month on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of every month.

**Would the employee substitute with annual leave only or can it be substituted with any other type of leave they have available?**

- An employee may elect to substitute EPL hours which exceed the limits with any appropriate leave they may have available.

**Can an employee who is not the legal guardian of a child be eligible for ELP?**

- OPM has referred back to 5 CFR 630.201 to identify an individual with any relationship to an employee.
- Good question for OPM.

**What about employees who have Alternate work schedules working 9 or 10 hour days - must they still report in increments of only 8 hour days?**

- No, employees can use EPL for the full nine or ten hours associated with their established Tour of Duty.
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***General interim solution usage questions (to include general and OBIEE):***

***General questions:***

**For the interim solution, what pay code is to be used?**

- Per the user group memo dated May 5, 2021, IBC recommends those employees code their time to **pay code 061** (Administrative Leave – Weather & Safety Leave Used) with the below associated payroll remarks during the qualifying period from March 11, 2021, until the programming is implemented in the August 2021 release.

**If an employee had already used annual or sick leave, wouldn't a correction be needed on a timecard to change to the 061 code?**

- IBC suggests a correction to pay code 061 with associated EPL remark.

**Can we just use the remark EPL and the reason without the occurrence and dates used?**

- Yes

**Is the EPL used so the employee does not have to use their regular leave and get paid?**

- Employees should use EPL only after the agency approves the use.
- EPL should be used for qualifying reasons.
- Employees do not have to use any other leave, unless they are exceeding the bi-weekly max of \$2,800 or exceeds the approved aggregate hour limit.

**What is the reason for the occurrence number being recorded in the remark?**

- This recommendation is intended to help client agencies track additional details related to an employee's use of EPL.
  - For example: Employee A uses 40 hours for EPL reason 1, then has a need to use another 40 hours for EPL reason 3.

**Should the timekeeper be the one who enters the EPL remark and will that facilitate pulling data from OBIEE on EPL usage?**

- It depends on the time and attendance (T&A) solutions.
- For IBC T&A solutions, both the employee and timekeepers can select the appropriate remark.
  - Quicktime users = the timekeeper can only select the checkbox for EPL - located just above the 8 EPL reasons

**Want to clarify - if we have used 061 for COVID related absences, should they be changed to EPL leave?**

- A corrected T&A will need to be submitted to add the EPL remark to those 061 absences in the interim solution. Then, after August 6, 2021, another T&A correction will need to be done to change the 061 to the correct FPPS EPL pay code.

**Will the EPL reference for the OBIEE report be appropriate for the Quicktime and WebTA systems only? How will this work with non-IBC T/A systems -- again, EPA uses PeoplePlus. I don't think "comments" are included in the pay file sent to IBC for processing.**

- This process will work the same for clients with their own T & A solution, provided those solutions allow for payroll remarks to be transmitted to IBC.

**If the employee used code 061 for EPL purposes, but did not use the remark code, should a correction to the 061 code to add the remarks code now?**

- IBC would recommend a corrected T&A be processed to ensure accurate use of the OBIEE query.

**Will any use of 061 since March 11, 2021, be documented as EPL, or can we still use the 061 as we have been?**

- Only hours of 061 being accompanied by a payroll remark starting with EPL will be documented as EPL.
- If you have intended for those hours to be associated with EPL, please submit a correct timesheet to include the payroll remark for those hours.

**What happens if an employee codes 061 with no remarks? We have fire and aviation employees that use 061 for mandatory days off after a fire assignment. Will the timesheet fatal?**

- FPPS will allow all timesheets with pay code 061 to process as normal for all non-EPL related instances.

**Do you have to enter a message identifying this as EPL leave usage and not for Adverse Weather?**

- For the interim solution, using pay code 061 with a remark that starts with EPL, identifying the qualifying reason, occurrence, and the dates used.
- In addition, upon implementation, it will help to identify those that need corrected T/As to reflect the new pay code for EPL.

**Is occurrence per day or per biweekly pay period?**

- The occurrence should be based on the reason used.

**Can LWOP be used as an interim process if the employee does not want an overpayment?**

- Agencies cannot submit claims for "reimbursement" unless employees use EPL hours.

**If employees record Leave Without Pay (LWOP) or sick leave for a pay period and then asking to convert it afterwards?**

- Corrected T&As can be submitted at any time.
- Remember, OPM just requires that EPL be paid to request reimbursement.
  - You can request reimbursement after payment.

**For employees who are teleworking, can they still use pay code 060 for dependent care 20 hours per PP?**

- EPL does not change other approved leave programs agencies have established.

**If the EPL usage began on March 11, 2021, wouldn't the employee be able to use EPL for the entire period?**

- March 11, 2021 is the second Thursday of the pay period.
  - The use of EPL is only approved from the effective date forward.

**Can employees still be reimbursed if they used their own Sick or Annual Leave, if it is coded as COVID?**

- If agencies have approved employees retroactively use of EPL hours, employees should submit a corrected TA to change sick or annual leave to the interim solution with the appropriate EPL remark.

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***OBIEE questions:***

**Is there a sample of what the OBIEE report will look like?**

- The Dashboard contains a Results set and five table sections.
- It's up to the user to opt which one works best for them.

**Example:**

The screenshot shows the OBIEE dashboard for COVID/FFCRA/ARPA-EPL/Weather & Safety. The dashboard includes a search prompt, filter options, a list of additional views, and a results table. A large text overlay reads: "Here are the sections available in this dashboard".

**COVID/FFCRA/ARPA-EPL/Weather & Safety Dashboard Prompt**

For the "s LIKE" operator prompts, you can search by full or partial Name, SSN, or Org. You can use the wildcard symbol % before or after the characters you enter. Separate requested values with a semicolon.  
Example: SMITH%, %SMITH%, JOHN SMITH; JANE SMITH, %001%, 001234567, 12345%, %123

\* Effective Pay Period Between 202103 --Select Value--  
\* Dept IN --Select Value--  
Bureau --Select Value--  
Sub Bur --Select Value--

Org is LIKE (pattern match) --Select Value--  
Ssn Char is LIKE (pattern match) --Select Value--  
Name Compressed is LIKE (pattern match) --Select Value--  
Employee Common Id Char is LIKE (pattern match) --Select Value--

COVID/FFCRA/EPL On Timesheet EPL;EMERGENCY PAID LEAVE

Apply Reset

**Additional Views:**

- TABLE - Admin Leave Weather and Safety 061
- TABLE - Admin Leave 060 OR 061
- TABLE - COVID/FFCRA/ARPA-EPL Message
- TABLE - Hazard Pay
- TABLE - COVID Leave

**RESULTS**

RESULTS

EPL Pp	Pay Period	Bureau	Sub Bur	Org	Name Compressed	SSN	Pay Code Group	COVID/FFCRA/EPL	Environmental Hazard Code	Environmental Hazard Code Desc	Hrs Worked	Base Rate
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**Can Datamart develop a report that identifies EPL dollar amounts and separates it from other weather and safety leave?**

- The OBIEE query built by IBC is to identify pay code 061 with a remark that starts with EPL.

**If our agency uses another pay code other than 061, could they adjust the OBIEE query to get the EPL remarks?**

- No, the query was specifically built to identify pay code 061 with EPL remarks.

**Will the reports show the days of the week rather than a total number of hours to make it easier to review that the EPL was used in full day increments?**

- We confirmed that employees can use EPL in fraction hours, such as 1/10th or 1/4th of an hour.
- The report will capture "Hrs Worked" which will give you the total hours worked.
  - This is not broken out by days of the week.
- If the user is a BI Author, they can get alter the analysis (from the Dashboard) and add in the Sun - Sat Hrs data columns themselves to obtain this information.

**What are the specific parameters of the query? For example: Pay code must equal 061, payroll remark must start with EPL, EPL must be capitalized, etc. (EPA asked that we be VERY specific).**

- On the Dashboard prompt, the required data columns that need values are: Effective Pay Period & Dept.
- For the "COVID/FFRAC/EPL" on Timesheet", filter drop down
  - It has "EPL" & "EMERGENCY PAID LEAVE" as options and users can select both.
- FYI: What we do behind the scenes is look for the T&A remark line that contains "EPL" and/or "Emergency Paid Leave" in it.

**Is the OBIEE report by pay period? If so, is a cumulative report going to be available?**

- Since this was built in the Time and Attendance Subject Area, it is pay period driven.
- It is **not** set-up as a cumulative report.
- Users need to keep in mind how large the T&A file really is.
- The file can contain a maximum of 80 occurrences for each employee's T&A line item data, so not really a good idea to query for large datasets.
  - Example: if only querying by Dept for 6 months to 1 year, OBIEE might time you out due to the data being requested taking too long to retrieve.

**Our Agency uses 061 for employees that are unable to work or work intermittently. We have advised our staff to use 065 Agency Directed Admin leave with the remarks. Will we be able to track the remarks in Datamart?**

- The query built for EPL has specific criteria.
  - It is built to pull in pay code 061 with the EPL remark.
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### ***Implementation of Enhancement of EPL questions:***

#### **Is it safe to assume there will be 8 pay codes in the Enhancement solution?**

- The final solution will include one pay code and will utilize the same payroll remark feature as the interim solution.

#### **Once the codes are available in webTA and corrected timesheets are submitted, are you saying that IBC will not calculate the maximums or create debts?**

- Upon the implementation of the final solution and the submission of a corrected timesheet containing the new FPPS pay code, FPPS will apply both the biweekly and aggregate limit and subsequently establish any necessary debts.

#### **In the final solution, if an employee reaches the biweekly limit or overall limit, will it be handled by conversion?**

- The final solution will apply the limits.
- However, the final solution will not perform any conversions; corrected timesheets will be required.

#### **Will EPL be documented on the Electronic Retirement Record (ERR)?**

- We are expecting program changes to add the EPL hours to the ERR.

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### ***Limits questions:***

#### **Is the bi-weekly limit “Gross” or “Net”?**

- The bi-weekly limit is calculated at Gross

#### **Can employees use a combination of EPL and other leave? Say they use EPL up to the \$2,800 limit. Can they use other leave so there is no reduction in pay should their bi-weekly pay exceed \$2,800?**

- Yes, the \$2,800 is limited to EPL leave used.
- This limit does not apply to the use of any other leave.

#### **Will the payroll system monitor/cut off at the limit?**

- During the interim solution, the system will not monitor the limits. Once FPPS has been programmed in the August 2021 release, all limits will be monitored systematically.

#### **Is there a recommendation for how agencies should monitor the biweekly limit? With the aggregate limit it will be a bit easier; however, the biweekly amount is monetary.**

- Utilizing the preestablished OBIEE query can help monitor the biweekly limit. The query can be found at Dashboards>components>Time Attendance> COVID/FFRCA/ARPA-EPL/WEATHER&SAFETY.

- Generally, if an employee makes more than \$35.00 an hour, you can divide the biweekly limit by the hourly rate to determine how many hours can be used.

**If an employee's gross bi-weekly salary is \$5,600, can they use 5 days of EPL and use other leave types for 5 days?**

- Yes, an employee can elect to use another type of leave for any hours exceeding the biweekly or aggregate limits.
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***EPL Effect on Retirement:***

**If someone uses 40 hours (of EPL), does that effect retirement time in service?**

- EPL does not affect eligibility, only calculation of their retirement annuity.

**So even if 40 hours is used, it is not creditable toward retirement?**

- All EPL hours used are to be excluded from the computation for an employee's retirement annuity.

**Who should we send the paperwork to?**

- Please follow any internal guidance or policies your client agency may have established. IBC only requires form OF 5057 for any retirement packages.
- Place the OF 5057 or similar worksheet on top of the retirement packet when sending it to IBC.
- This will allow us to enter the EPL remark and hours manually on the ERR until programming can be done to automatically pull those hours onto the ERR.

**Can you go over how IBC will gather EPL total hours and put them in the ERRs that are for a transfer-out or a resignation (not a retirement)?**

- We are expecting that programming changes and subsequent timecard changes to the EPL hours will populate ERR corrections for us to send to OPM.

**Creditable service for annuity calculation vs eligibility service credit?**

- The EPL hours are only reducing the total service used for the annuity calculation. Refer to BAL 21-102 and the examples at the end of it.

**If the time taken is not included in the high 3, then it would not apply?**

- There is no effect on the "high three".
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### *SF-1150s Questions:*

**IBC produces SF-1150s for separations and transfers. Can you explain IBC's plan to ensure EPL is added to all SF-1150s?**

**OPM specified that EPL is to be added to the SF-1150 in the Remarks Section-Block 24. If IBC is not going to do this, then will the record of EPL be solely dependent upon agencies putting an OF 5057 in the eOPF every pay period?**

- During the interim solution IBC cannot support adding this information to the SF-1150.
  - POD will continue to brainstorm if this would be possible.
  - Once new pay codes are established box 24 on SF-1150 will be populated.
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### *Agency Requirement Questions:*

**If I remember correctly an employee must submit supporting docs to request EPL. Is that still the case and will that have to be submitted when requesting reimbursement?**

- IBC recommends following the requirements from OPM.
- There are specific requirements for employees and the need for agencies to approve or deny the request.

**Does an employee need to complete an understanding/agreement form for each occurrence solidifying they understand reimbursement is based on availability?**

- IBC encourages client agencies to follow any internal guidance and/ or policies established.
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### *OPM Leave Reimbursement Fund Questions:*

**When does the fund end?**

- The Fund remains available through September 30, 2021 (to make reimbursements to agencies for payments for leave used during the qualifying period) unless the Fund is exhausted prior to that date.
  - If the Fund is exhausted, payments of paid leave under this authority will cease and corrected T&A's would need to be submitted for each employee.

**How will agencies know when the fund is exhausted?**

- OPM will be monitoring the fund on a regular basis and will notify agencies as it gets close to exhaustion. Agencies can also monitor a dashboard that will be set up at

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/ARPA> to track overall fund usage. This dashboard will reflect data reported to OPM by agencies through the reimbursement process.

**So, the employee completes a period as LWOP or SICK or whatever... and then after that period has been completed, the agency then submits a request for the EPL leave?**

- No, employees are not required to use any other leave type prior to using EPL. Agencies submit claims for “reimbursement” after EPL is used (after completing the biweekly pay period).

**Is the reimbursement only for EPL used and is it to the agency who made the payment?**

- Yes, an agency can only claim reimbursement for EPL hours used, and OPM will issue repayment to the agency, provided the fund is not exhausted.

**What is the turnaround time for OPM to notify if funds aren't available?**

- OPM will be monitoring the fund on a regular basis and will notify agencies as it gets close to exhaustion.
- Agencies can also monitor a dashboard that will be set up at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/ARPA> to track overall fund usage. This dashboard will reflect data reported to OPM by agencies through the reimbursement process.
- IBC is not aware of the specific turnaround time frame.

**Is the EPL conditional on the funds being available and the speed of the agency's processing of the request to OPM?**

- The use of EPL is conditional on funds being available.
- Agencies should be requesting reimbursement on a bi-weekly basis.

**If a reimbursement request is denied and the employee has to go back and does not have leave to cover, will they receive a debt? If so, how long will they have to repay it back?**

- Yes, the employee would receive a debt.
- We follow Debt Collection Improvement Act (DCIA) and Debt Collection Act
  - Depending on which act it falls under, those rules and regulations will be followed

**That is the same for the 4 hours of leave that was issued for the vaccine. So, we can't submit for reimbursement?**

- A client agency cannot submit reimbursement for anything other than hours directly related to EPL.
  - Therefore, if your client agency has authorized employees to use another type of leave (e.g. Admin leave) to receive the vaccine, and this authorization of leave is not EPL you cannot submit the four hours of leave for reimbursement.
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