

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
PERTAINING TO GOVERNOR'S REQUEST OF MARCH 9, 2009
Rev. 5/21/2009**

These frequently asked questions cover the period from May 21, 2009 until further notice and accompany Form CT-HR-7c.

Q1: Are employees required to participate in the Voluntary Schedule Reduction Program (VSRP) in response to the request made by the Governor in her March 9, 2009 letter?

A: Participation in the VSRP is purely voluntary. The VSRP has existed since 1991; however, the Governor is reminding all employees and agencies of its availability as a cost-savings measure during these difficult economic times.

Q2: What is the timeline for the Governor's recent request?

A: The Governor is encouraging all employees to participate in the VSRP between March 11, 2009 and June 1, 2009. The Governor's request has been extended until further notice.

Q3: Will my creditable service for the purpose of seniority, longevity and retirement be negatively impacted if I choose to take unpaid leave time under the VSRP?

A: Section 5-248c-3 of the Personnel Regulations specifically addresses this topic. An employee who participates in the VSRP receives full credit towards seniority, longevity and retirement. Additionally, earnings for unpaid leave taken under the VSRP are not impacted for retirement purposes. In other words, salary that would have been earned will be added to your actual earnings for retirement calculations if the voluntary leave occurs during your three highest earnings years. (Note: this language is effective June 9, 1994)

Q4: I currently receive health insurance benefits through my employment with the State of Connecticut. If I participate in the VSRP, am I still eligible for health and life insurance?

A: Section 5-248c-2(c) of the Personnel Regulations specifically addresses this topic: "A schedule reduction shall not be granted if it would result in an employee falling below the threshold for eligibility for health insurance benefits."

Q5: I would like to take unpaid leave under the VSRP but I am still in my initial working test period. Is there an exception that may be made for me to participate in this program?

A: No. Section 5-248c-1(b) requires an employee to be permanent in order to participate in the VSRP.

Q6: I am in a promotional working test period. If I participate in the VSRP, will the time I take as unpaid leave be counted toward completion of my working test period?

A: No. Section 5-248c-2(d) specifies, "...Days off which are taken as a result of this program shall not be counted toward completion of a Promotional Working Test Period."

Q7: How do I make my request to take unpaid leave day in response to the Governor's request?

A: Employees requesting unpaid leave under the VSRP from June 1, 2009 until further notice must complete the **Form CT-HR-7c**. This form is available on-line at: <http://www.das.state.ct.us/HR/Forms/VSRP%20Form%207c%202009%2005%2018.pdf> (Please note the June 1, 2009 end date has been removed from the request form to conform to the Governor's most recent request; however, a note has been added on this form for agencies to restrict any single request for unpaid leave under the VSRP to a maximum of three months duration.)

Q8: What are my options under the VSRP?

A: You may take leave under the VSRP as (A) sporadic full or partial days, or as (B) a reduction in your weekly schedule. See Form CT-HR-7c "Option A" and "Option B".

Q9: I would like to take more than one day off in a row. May I do this?

A: Yes. The limitation on taking consecutive full scheduled workdays is being waived for unpaid leave taken under the VSRP from March 11, 2009 to June 1, 2009; however, as indicated above the provisions of the Governor's request have been extended until further notice. The regulations provide for leave under the VSRP provide your hours do not fall beneath the threshold for health and life insurance benefits. For most bargaining units, this is the equivalent of working at least halftime (weekly). Check with your Human Resources Office for the minimum number of weekly hours you are required to work. Note: this provision applies to all employees, whether an eligible employee has opted to receive these benefits with the State of Connecticut or not. Additionally, for the purpose of calculating the number of hours for eligibility for benefits, furlough days are considered to be equivalent to unpaid leave taken under the VSRP. Therefore when a furlough day occurs, you must be careful that the furlough day and hours taken under the VSRP do not bring you below the threshold for benefits.

Q10: May I take consecutive partial days under the VSRP? For example, would it be permissible to reduce my hours each day from 8 to 7?

A: Yes.

Q11: If I take a partial day of unpaid leave under the VSRP, is there a minimum amount of time I must take?

A: Yes. You must take at least one hour in a day.

Q12: I work a Monday through Friday work schedule and I want to take every Monday as unpaid leave under the VSRP. Will I get paid for a holiday if it falls on a Monday such as Memorial Day?

A: Yes. You will be paid for the holiday as if you were not taking unpaid leave under the VSRP. You will revert back to your normal schedule for the workweek containing Memorial Day.

Q13: I work a Monday through Friday work schedule and I want to take every Monday as unpaid leave under the VSRP. What happens when a holiday falls on another day in the week such as Good Friday?

A: You will take your voluntary leave day on the Monday and you will be paid for the holiday on Friday

Q14: If I take an unpaid leave day under the VSRP before and/or after a holiday, will this affect my holiday pay?

A: No. Benefits are not to be diminished under the VSRP so holidays are to be paid in both of these situations.

Q15: If I request unpaid leave under the VSRP, will my request be automatically approved?

A: No. Although agencies are encouraged to consider all requests for unpaid leave under the VSRP between now and June 1, 2009, agencies cannot approve requests that would result in overtime costs or have a significant impact on critical services. This remains in effect for requests submitted after June 1, 2009. Although individual requests may be approved for a three months period, agencies may opt to limit the approved request to a shorter duration due to operational and staffing reasons.

Q16: If I take part in the VSRP, will my position change from full-time to part-time?

A: No.

Q17: I took unpaid leave, vacation or PL prior to the Governor's most recent request/communication about the VSRP. Can I change this time to a day under the VSRP?

A: No. Time under the VSRP must be pre-approved.

Q18: How should I code my timesheet for unpaid leave under the VSRP?

A: One of the following Time and Labor (attendance) codes should be used:

UVLRP – for agencies who enter attendance data directly into Core-CT system

VL – Time Processing System

Other time code denoting absence was due to leave under the VSRP – for agencies not entering attendance data directly into Core-CT nor using Time Processing System

Q19: If I am sick and I have sick leave accruals available, can I take unpaid time under the VSRP instead of using my sick time?

A: No. Time under the VSRP must be pre-approved and typically sick leave is not pre-approved although a medical certificate may be required. In addition, when an employee's is absent from work for medical reasons the employee must use their sick leave accruals: the employee cannot use personal leave or vacation leave or take unpaid leave when the employee is incapacitated for duty and has not exhausted his/her sick leave. The same logic would hold for unpaid time taken under the VSRP.

Q20: If I am sick and I have exhausted my sick leave accruals, can I take this time as unpaid under the VSRP?

A: No. If the employee has exhausted his/her sick leave, unpaid time under the VSRP cannot be approved as the purpose of the VSRP is to save the state money: this would not result in a savings to the state.

Q21: If I request and receive approval to take leave under the VSRP and later change my mind, may I rescind the request?

A: Yes and no. You may rescind your request to take leave under the VSRP provided the date(s) requested have not yet passed. You may not, however, take the pre-scheduled leave off and then rescind your request after-the-fact.

Q22: If I take unpaid leave under the VSRP now and later am required to take a furlough day, can the leave under the VSRP satisfy the furlough day requirement?

A: No. At this time, leave taken under the VSRP may not substitute for any furlough day(s) that may be required in the future.

Q23: My full-time schedule was 40 hours per week but I have been approved to work a reduced schedule under the VSRP. My schedule is to work Monday – Friday, 6.50 hours each day. When a holiday is observed, will I be paid 8 hours or 6.50 hours for that holiday?

A: You will be paid the same number of hours that you would have otherwise received had you not been participating in the VSRP (8 hours).

Q24: I am in a Leadership Associate program. Am I eligible to participate in the VSRP?

A: Yes and no. As with all employees, if you are in your initial working test period you may not participate in the VSRP. If you are not in your initial working test period you are eligible to take full or partial days under the VSRP (Option A) but ineligible to reduce your schedule from full- to part-time (Option B), as employees in the Leadership Associate job class must work full-time, in accordance with the class specification. Keep in mind if you take more than 3 leave days (or the equivalent number of hours) under the VSRP, your training period will be extended by the same number of days,

consistent with extensions of the working test period (see General Letter No. 31). Additionally, three year training programs cannot be extended (see CGS §5-234).

Q25: I am in a training program (other than Leadership Associate). Am I eligible to participate in the VSRP?

A: Yes and no. As with all employees, if you are in your initial working test period you may not participate in the VSRP. If you are not in your initial working test period, then you may participate in the VSRP provided you meet the experience and training of the target position at the end of your training program. Keep in mind if you take more than 3 leave days under the VSRP (or the equivalent number of hours), your training period will be extended by the same number of days, consistent with extensions of the working test period (see General Letter No. 31). Additionally, three year training programs cannot be extended (see CGS §5-234).

Q26: I have requested and have received approval to reduce my (Monday – Friday) work schedule from full-time to part-time (five 8-hour days to five 5-hours per week). If I am absent and must charge my leave accruals, how many hours will be charged per day?

A: Five. The benefit is that you are accruing leave time based on your schedule prior to initiating your reduced work schedule under the VSRP. However, the deduction from your leave codes is to be based on the hours of work you are missing due to your absence based on the approved (VSRP) work schedule. The same is true for any absence that is not caused by the observance of a holiday.