



# CARES ACT ADMINISTRATIVE Q&As

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides sweeping relief to retirement plan participants impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, notably in the form of expanded distribution and loan provisions for qualifying individuals, as well as some administrative relief for plan administrators. The FAQs below focus on some of the broader issues arising in the administration of the provisions of the CARES Act.

**G1: When would a plan sponsor need to make the decision to adopt the provisions of the CARES Act?**

**A:** There is no specific deadline, but as a practical matter certain provisions have a limited window. One such window is the increased amount of participant loans, which only applies to loans from the enactment date (3/27/20) through the next 180 days (until 9/23/20).

**G2: Could a sponsor adopt some of the provisions and not adopt others?**

**A:** Yes. But remember, the plan will need to be amended (by the end of the 2022 plan year for non-governmental plans) to reflect the actual administration of the plan.

**G3: If no withdrawal or loan provisions are utilized, will an amendment still be required for the RMD provisions?**

**A:** The IRS should be providing guidance on implementing the relief, but generally a plan must eventually be amended to reflect its operation. Whether an amendment is needed will depend on what the employer does in operation and what the current plan provisions provide. It's possible the IRS will issue sample amendments similar to what they did in 2009 (see IRS Notice 2009-82). But ultimately, the terms of the plan will need to reflect actual operation of the plan.

**G4: Will there be any COVID-19 relief for nonqualified plans?**

**A:** There was none in the CARES Act. We do not know if there will be any relief for nonqualified plans in subsequent legislation.

**G5: Has the 403(b) restatement deadline been pushed back?**

**A:** Yes, the deadline was moved from March 31, 2020, to June 30, 2020.

**G6: Does the Act extend the Form 5500 series filing deadline?**

**A:** No, it does not, but it does give the DOL the authority to do so.



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**G7: What is the recommendation regarding preparing Form 5330s for late ADP returns, and advising our clients on filing them given the extension request by the ARA?**

**A:** While ARA has requested an extension, that is no guarantee that one will be granted by the IRS. It would be prudent to adhere to the current deadlines until any relief is formally provided.

**G8: Since the due date of tax returns is extended to 7/15 is there still another 6½-month extension as per usual—making them due 1/15/2021?**

**A:** No, it is only the original 4/15 date that is given the extra time, not the extension date.

**G9: If a plan uses the safe harbor hardship provisions, could an individual qualify for a hardship under the new safe harbor hardship event for FEMA declared disasters?**

**A:** Currently, the answer appears to be no. The regulation specifies that hardship distributions are allowed for employees in an area “designated for individual assistance” as a result of a FEMA disaster declaration. In response to COVID-19, President Trump issued an emergency declaration under the Stafford Act. In addition, FEMA indicated that the “declaration does not make direct financial assistance available to individuals.” A number of states have received disaster declarations, but currently no individual assistance related to COVID-19 is available through FEMA. To monitor future updates on FEMA individual assistance, see <https://www.fema.gov/individual-disaster-assistance>.



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## MISCELLANEOUS

### Paycheck Protection Program

**M1: Section 1102 of the Act provides forgiveness for SBA loans under the Paycheck Protection Program. This loan is forgiven if it used for certain items including payroll costs. One of the items listed under payroll costs is payment of compensation with respect to an employee that is payment of any retirement benefit. This does not appear to apply to the employer's retirement plan contribution. Do you have any insight on what payment of retirement benefits qualify as payroll costs under the Act?**

**A:** In FAQ's released April 6, 2020, the Department of the Treasury clarified that employer contributions to both defined contribution plans and defined benefit plans are included in the definition of payroll costs when calculating the maximum amount of a PPP loan. Further the \$100,000 cap on compensation applies only to salary; the cap does not apply to employer contribution to DC and DB plans



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## Families First Coronavirus Response Act

**M2: Are emergency paid leave payments for COVID-19 (childcare, Coronavirus diagnosis) pay for IRC §415 purposes? Employers might need time to amend their plan to reflect how they handled it in payroll for deferrals and benefits.**

**A:** Until we get contrary guidance from the IRS, there is nothing to indicate that you can exclude it from 415 compensation. For many plan purposes, however, you can adjust 415 compensation. We do not know if the exclusion of these amounts would be a safe harbor adjustment under IRC §414(s), so it's possible that nondiscrimination testing may be required (but presumably you wouldn't need to worry about that until after the plan year has ended). If you want to exclude it for purposes of determining benefits, it would be advisable to amend the plan as soon as possible—otherwise you could have issues with the anti-cutback rules of IRC §411(d)(6).



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