



## WORKER RIGHTS · RHODE ISLAND

# Know Your Rights in Rhode Island

What every hospitality worker should know, in plain language.  
No legal jargon.

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This guide is general information about Rhode Island employment law as of October 2026. It is not legal advice, and not a substitute for talking to a licensed attorney about your situation.

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As of October 2026 · Prepared by JYNX Recruiting · [jynxrecruiting.com](https://jynxrecruiting.com)

## The Basics

Rhode Island pays like a Northeastern state and insures like no one else: its temporary disability insurance dates to 1942, the nation's oldest such system, decades before paid family leave was a phrase. Read the fine print twice in this state, though. Its famous Sunday premium law does not cover the restaurant and hotel workers people assume it protects, and its disability pay and its job protection live in separate statutes that do not travel together.

- Minimum wage: \$16.00 an hour from January 1, 2026, rising to \$17.00 on January 1, 2027 (already enacted).
- Narrow exemptions exist, including certain seasonal resorts and camps.

## Your Paycheck

- Pay is WEEKLY by default, unless a different schedule fits the statute's conditions. Paydays run within 9 days of the pay period's end.
- Pay stubs and itemized deductions are your right. You can see what you earned and what came out, line by line.

## Final Pay

- Due by the NEXT REGULAR PAYDAY, whether you quit or are fired.
- Accrued vacation is paid out after one year of service.
- If the business liquidates, closes, or moves out of state, final pay is due within 24 HOURS.

## Tips

- Cash wage: \$3.89 an hour, with a maximum tip credit of \$12.11. Cash wages plus tips must always reach \$16.00 an hour, and tips below the floor are the employer's to make up.
- The statute defines gratuities as VOLUNTARY compensation from the customer. A compulsory service charge is not the same thing as a tip.

## Overtime and Sundays: Read This One Carefully

- Overtime is time and a half after 40 hours in a week.
- THE SUNDAY RULE: Rhode Island law requires 1.5× pay for Sunday and holiday work and gives workers the right to refuse it. But the statute's definition of "employee" EXCLUDES people who work for a restaurant, hotel, motel, or resort.
- The Sunday premium is real, and it is real for retail workers. Most hospitality staff are carved out of it. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise in either direction.

## Meal Periods

- In a 6-hour shift, a 20-minute meal period. In an 8-hour shift, 30 minutes. Meal periods may be unpaid.
- Only healthcare facilities and worksites with fewer than three people on a shift are exempt.

## Paid Sick and Safe Leave

- Accrue 1 hour for every 35 hours worked, up to 40 hours a year. At employers with 18 or more employees the leave is PAID. Smaller employers must provide the same leave but may make it unpaid.
- New hires may wait up to 90 days to use it. Temporary staff may wait 180 days, seasonal staff 150 days.
- Uses include your own illness and care, a family member's, and the effects of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking, for you or family and household members.

## Disability and Family Leave: TDI and TCI

- Rhode Island's system is funded entirely by YOUR payroll deductions: 1.1% of the first \$100,000 in 2026.
- TDI pays when your own illness or injury keeps you out at least 7 days. Your weekly benefit is 4.62% of your highest-earning quarter's wages. The Department of Labor and Training's claimant guide puts the floor at \$148 and the ceiling at \$1,150 a week for benefit years beginning July 1, 2026. Benefits run up to 30 weeks, plus \$20 a week per dependent child.
- TCI pays for family care and bonding: 8 WEEKS from January 1, 2026 (up from 7 in 2025), now including siblings and bone-marrow and organ donors.
- JOB PROTECTION, STATED EXACTLY: TDI itself does NOT restore your job. TCI carries its own restoration right in its statute. Rhode Island's separate family and medical leave law gives 13 weeks of job-protected leave in a two-year span, but only at employers with 50 or more employees and only for full-time staff working 30 or more hours a week. Disability pay and job protection live in separate statutes here. Do not assume one brings the other.

## Non-Competes

- Non-competes are VOID against four groups: workers covered by federal overtime law (nonexempt workers), student interns, anyone 18 or under, and low-wage employees, those earning at or below 250% of the federal poverty line, measured on the first 40 hours a week.

## **Pay Equity**

- You may ASK for the wage range. On request, an employer must give an applicant the range for the position, and must give employees their range at hire and on transfer. Ranges are not required in job postings.
- Employers may not seek or rely on your wage history. After an offer, history you volunteer can only be used to pay you MORE.

## **If Something Goes Wrong**

- Wage claims go to RI DLT Labor Standards: (401) 462-8550, [DLT.LaborStandards@dlt.ri.gov](mailto:DLT.LaborStandards@dlt.ri.gov).
- Discrimination complaints go to the RI Commission for Human Rights. File within ONE YEAR.