

Paid Family & Medical Leave

An Evidence-Driven Strategy to Prevent Child Maltreatment



Paid leave policies provide employees with partially- or fully- compensated time away from work for specific, significant family caregiving needs. Paid family and medical leave policies are concrete supports and are critical in preventing child abuse and neglect because they allow parents to take protected time off from work without jeopardizing their finances or employment. This is a concrete policy solution that will support families in time of need.

The science is also clear that the early weeks of life are critical to parent-child attachment and the creation of the nurturing, responsive relationships that babies need to build a strong foundation for life-long brain development, learning, and good health.

Evidence suggests that Paid Family Leave DOES:

- improve family functioning, including **preventing child maltreatment** and reducing domestic violence;
- increase labor force participation for women;
- increase the likelihood of workers returning to work after leave has ended;
- **reduce infant mortality**; and
- improve physical health among children, and mothers' physical and mental healthⁱ.
- decrease nursing home usage;
- decrease reliance on public assistance; and
- increase support for individuals and families battling opioid addictionⁱⁱ.

The Business & Economic Case

Family-friendly workplace policies help attract and retain top talent. In addition to giving workplaces a competitive edge, family-friendly employers benefit from reduced employee health care costs, a healthier work environment, and fewer employee absences. Paid family leave increases labor force participation, particularly among women, and states that have implemented paid family leave policies have seen that access to paid family leave has increased the likelihood of workers returning to work after a leave has endedⁱⁱⁱ.

- **75% of employers** in NC think family-friendly policies have a positive impact on their organization^{iv}.
- **73% of employees** in NC would be more committed to their employer if they offered more family-friendly practices^v.
- The US birth rate is at an all-time low, with anticipated long-term economic repercussions of a smaller future labor force. When polled on why Americans were having fewer babies, **77% reported having no access to or not enough paid leave**^{vi}.

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The Family Case

Supportive policies that strengthen economic supports yield significant benefits to an organization, individual, and their family. When families face unseen financial hardships, it sets the stage for increased parental stress, which could be a trigger for abuse and neglect.

- About **1 in 4 working moms are returning to work within two weeks after giving birth, and 12% return within one week**^{vii}, a time that is critical for parent-child attachment; early child development and infant health; and maternal physical and mental health.
- Boosting family income through paid family leave can relieve pressure, helping to head off childhood adversity before it happens. Furthermore, economic stability is a protective factor that benefits children long after the critical brain development period from birth to three.
- The "Sandwich Generation" is the time of life when middle-aged adults, who are often caring for young children, are also providing care for their aging parents. Around **40% of caregivers for elderly relatives work in inflexible environments and have been forced to reduce their work hours or quit**^{viii}. This has a substantial impact on women in the workforce.

There is growing support in North Carolina

- **At least 23 local governments** have approved paid parental or family leave policies for local government employees ranging from Charlotte to Rolesville and Person County to New Hanover County.
- **Executive Order 95**^{ix} provided paid parental leave to 59,000 state employees, while **UNC Board of Governors extended paid parental leave to 33,000 employees.**

There is room for public policy to make paid leave more widely available. Paid family leave policies have benefits for parents, children, businesses, and the economy.

Endnotes

ⁱ <https://duke.app.box.com/s/9wti16byhdyz6k99ri2yib3ttlprgl8>

ⁱⁱ <https://duke.app.box.com/s/9wti16byhdyz6k99ri2yib3ttlprgl8>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://duke.app.box.com/s/9wti16byhdyz6k99ri2yib3ttlprgl8>

^{iv} <https://familyforwardnc.com/business-smart/#marker-94-5>

^v <https://familyforwardnc.com/business-smart/#marker-94-5>

^{vi} <https://familyforwardnc.com/families-have-changed/#marker-7-15>

^{vii} <https://inthesetimes.com/article/the-real-war-on-families>

^{viii} www.standard.com/employer/paid-family-leave/eldercare-and-paid-family-leave-love-and-bottom-line

^{ix} <https://governor.nc.gov/documents/executive-order-no-95-providing-paid-parental-leave-eligible-state-employees>