

Opportunities to Improve Statewide Paid Family Leave Programs



Paid bonding leave, which is a form of family leave, provides caregivers with critical time off to bond with a new child within one year of the child's birth, adoption, or foster care placement and promotes employment, supports parent-child bonding, and improves parent and child health. Paid medical leave allows workers to take time off to recover from a serious medical illness or event, including childbirth.

As more states consider enacting a comprehensive paid family and medical leave policy or look to strengthen existing policies, there are multiple levers policymakers may incorporate to adequately support all families and potentially reduce racial disparities in access to paid leave and its benefits.

State-level opportunities to strengthen paid family leave programs include:



Institute more inclusive eligibility requirements.

- Define eligibility broadly to cover more workers in businesses of all sizes.
- Link benefits to workers to allow all work history for covered employers to count toward benefit eligibility.
- Include diverse family structures in the definition of relationships that qualify for bonding leave.



Offer an evidence-based benefit of at least 6 weeks of paid family leave for all parents and at least 12 weeks for parents who give birth.



Ensure leave is job-protected.



Compare the policy design tradeoffs that impact how much different workers will be paid on leave to provide the greatest assistance to those with the fewest resources.



Distribute the burden of funding the program benefits across workers and employers.



Limit administrative burden for families.



Invest in public awareness campaigns.

For additional insight into the state policy design and implementation decisions that can increase access to paid family leave, see our [state policy lever checklist](#).

The opportunities to improve state paid family leave programs are informed by a rigorous review of federal labor and family leave policies over the last 175 years. Our review demonstrates that paid leave has been inaccessible for many families with low incomes, particularly families of color. Read more [here](#).