



Re-Centering:

STATE OF INDIANA

New Parent Leave Policy Evaluation



Indiana Coalition
Against
Domestic Violence

Prevention • Awareness • Advocacy
Until the Violence Ends.

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Appreciation

We extend our deep appreciation to the Holcomb administration for prioritizing workplace supports for families. We offer particular thanks to the Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch, for making space to evaluate the impacts of the New Parent Leave policy. We could not have conducted this evaluation without the generous collaboration of the Indiana State Personnel Department, and particularly Kirolos Barsoum who provided detailed information about the NPL policy and shared information about our evaluation project to invite the participation of supervisors and parents who had experience with it. Last, we share our deep thanks with all of the supervisors and parents with the State of Indiana who shared their time, expertise and stories with us. We hope that you find your recommendations in this report and thank you for helping us to understand how paid family leave policies can benefit both the workplace and families.

“ I just really feel fortunate that the new parent leave was in place when I had my first child, and grateful that it has continued. Overall, I think that it improves morale among state employees, just knowing that the support from the top exists. And just really kudos to Governor Holcomb. I know that he was partially responsible for putting the policy in place, and it was a nice surprise. I think that he’s put some policies and procedures in place, in addition to just supporting and acknowledging, and celebrating state employees. So that really has not gone unnoticed.” – Parent who used the NPL benefit

“ The new parent benefit is one of the best benefits of state employment, reducing financial stress is a major benefit when it comes to being a new parent. Not having to worry about going through all of my accrued paid time off was also a major stress reliever because I knew, new parent leave will be available to me. I can’t say enough positive things about how much new parent leave reduced stress in my household.” – Parent who used the NPL benefit

“ I was in management for 10 years, and people have used the new parent leave while reporting to me quite a bit. And yeah, I noticed just an absolute feeling of relief from them when that came out, because they worked for me. I was in management before it existed, and it was a huge stress. I don’t think there was a single person who went out on leave that didn’t have that stress.” – Supervisor who supported team members in using the NPL benefit

This evaluation was conducted by the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV). The Coalition works with a range of stakeholders across Indiana to provide services and support for survivors of domestic violence. Additionally, ICADV works to prevent violence by promoting safe, stable and nurturing community conditions that enable all of us to safely grow and thrive. This evaluation is being conducted as part of Indiana’s [DELTA AHEAD](#) Cooperative Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the ways that employee benefits like parental leave can contribute to a range of positive public health outcomes by supporting families’ economic stability as new parents form strong family bonds. Please direct any questions regarding the report, or requests for additional data to Colleen Yeakle, cyeakle@icadvinc.org.

Executive Summary

Studies of paid family leave policies report a broad range of positive outcomes for children and families. The public health community has identified paid family leave (PFL) as an effective strategy for preventing intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)^{1,2,3}. Family-friendly policies like these reduce risk factors for multiple forms of violence by increasing economic stability, reducing families' stress and by fostering strong family connections.⁴

Additionally, paid parental leave is connected to better health outcomes for mothers and infants. Health benefits for infants include higher birth weights and rates of full-term delivery, increases in breastfeeding initiation and duration, and higher rates of participation in vaccinations and well child visits^{5,6}. Mothers who have paid leave have lower rates of re-hospitalization post birth, and lower rates of post-partum depression^{7,8,9}. With this broad range of benefits, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends action to ensure that comprehensive and universal paid family leave benefits are available for all families¹⁰. Because Indiana is among the states with the highest rates of maternal and infant mortality in the country, enacting policies that increase supports for mothers and babies is a top public health priority.^{11,12}

Paid parental leave is also good for fathers. Studies show that paid parental leave policies that include fathers increase their participation in parenting responsibilities, thereby reducing maternal stress and inter-parental conflict^{13,14}. When dads are involved early in caregiving and bonding with their child, that increased involvement tends to be sustained throughout childhood-conferring many additional protections¹⁵. Increasing the balance in caregiving responsibilities between mothers and fathers also increases employment continuity and earning among women, thereby potentially reducing the lifetime gender wage gaps between women and men.^{16,17}

In spite of these benefits, the United States has not taken action to adopt a federal paid family leave benefit making the US the only developed country without such a benefit for families. Absent a universal, federal benefit, thirteen states have taken local action to enact a parental leave benefit. Bills proposing a paid family and/or parental leave benefit have been introduced at the Indiana General Assembly over the past decade, but to date, these bills have not passed out of committee, or received a hearing on the floor. Accordingly, less than a quarter of all working parents in Indiana receive any paid family leave time. Though a little over 50% of Hoosiers work in settings that make them eligible for unpaid leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), it is very difficult for lower income workers to be able to afford to use unpaid leave time.¹⁸

Though Indiana does not have legislation establishing a universal PFL benefit, the Holcomb administration enacted a New Parent Leave (NPL) benefit for all state employees in 2018. In policy-related documents, the Indiana State Personnel Department (ISPD) describes the State's commitment to this benefit: *"The State of Indiana, as an employer, is dedicated to facilitating opportunities for family time, which in turn improves quality of life in the state by strengthening families and communities."*

In the period of time between the enactment of the policy in January 2018 and November 2023, the ISPD reported that 4,117 state employees had requested the NPL benefit. With this, a large and diverse sample of parents who had used the benefit, from across the 24 work sectors within state government were available to evaluate the workplace and family impacts of the NPL policy.



Workplace Impacts

BURDEN AND COSTS

A strong majority of supervisors described the burdens of navigating NPL as minimal and reported that the benefits to the employee and workplace were significantly greater than the burdens. Supervisors of small teams observed the most significant impacts around covering team members' leave. Though they acknowledged that an employee's absence did add to their team members' workloads, one supervisor observed that because employees are eligible for FML, they would be covering their leave responsibilities with or without the NPL. Supervisors reported that they did not incur any additional costs through covering employees' NPL and 78% reported that employees' use of leave had either no effect, or a positive effect on workplace productivity.

TEAMWORK

Supervisors praised their team members for the ways that they worked together to cover colleagues' use of the NPL. Many reported that employees were very proactive in preparing for their leave — completing large assignments in advance and providing detailed information about work that would need to be covered in their absence. They said that team members were generally very flexible and willing to step up to make the work “work” through a team member's absence. They observed that this also created opportunities for cross training in responsibilities that helped them all to navigate unplanned absences.

“I think the impact on our team has been pretty minimal. We have a pretty close-knit team, and we're always willing to jump in to cover things. And both of them were very good about making sure that their cases were covered, and that there were no loose strings hanging. And both of them, when they came back, were ready to just jump right back into things.”

RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND LOYALTY

Supervisors praised the State for adopting the NPL benefit. They observed that the policy helped to make the State competitive in recruiting new employees, helped them to retain great colleagues, and fostered workplace loyalty. They reported that new parents appreciated the time and returned to work eager to hit the ground running.

“I think that it helps make the State of Indiana competitive in terms of employees coming in. I think it's a very important benefit for that purpose and for maintaining your employees. You know, as a woman who is of childbearing age, just knowing that I'm in a steady position at a company that offers new parent leave makes me want to stay here.”

Family Impacts

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Nearly all of the parents who used the NPL benefit reported that it increased their household economic security (97%) and reduced their feelings of financial stress (95%) upon welcoming a new child. Many reported that they simply would not have been able to afford to take unpaid leave time.

“There was less stress, knowing that income would be coming in and knowing that it was a hundred percent paid was a really great factor for planning...it just made a huge difference, and being able to afford things for the baby and bills while I was off, so I would say it had a huge impact.”

PARENTING SKILLS

Parents said that the NPL time gave them the space that they needed to develop parenting skills, schedules and routines. Those who were co-parenting said that it helped them to determine how they would share parenting responsibilities and helped to strengthen their relationship.

“I’d say the first month for both kiddos. I think, for any parent is super hard because you’re not sleeping, and you’re trying to get used to how do they like to be fed? How do they like to be held? You know, catering to their every need. And especially the first go around, we had no idea what we were doing. And her and I have some time together, I think it allowed us to experience everything together, make mistakes together, but learn together, which really helped.”

BONDING

Nearly all of the parents who used NPL (98%) reported that the time was critical for supporting their ability to bond with their new child. It also gave them the space to maintain their bonds with their other children and to form their new family relationships.

“You know those moments. I cherish and I think about them. It was amazing, and I’m glad I was able to stay home. And experience that early bonding. She looks at me, her eyes sparkle, and she loves me. I can see it. And everyone can, too, you know it all started, in those first days and weeks.”

HEALTH

Parents reported that the use of NPL time supported their health and their infants’ health. Mothers reported that they could take the time that they needed to recover from delivery; fathers reported that the time enabled them to cover parenting and household responsibilities while their co-parent healed. Mothers described how reduced stress and the ability to get critical rest contributed to their mental health, and many reported that the time allowed them to establish breastfeeding routines. Parents used the time to attend their new child’s healthcare appointments and also to cover days when their new child got sick.

“So I was able to basically keep the house clean, do all the diapers do every possible thing, so my wife could just recover. And, again, so grateful that I was able to do that. I think that made a big difference. Yeah, you always worry about postpartum depression and things like that. My wife never got it, and she often says she could see how easily people could get into that. But because of support that I was able to provide her by NPL at home, she always felt loved, appreciated, and, you know, just supported that she was able to take it easy.”



Evaluation Process

Methodology

The evaluation team conducted surveys and interviews with parents who used the benefit and with workplace supervisors who oversaw team members who used the benefit to determine the impacts of the NPL policy. Survey and interview participants were diverse in their experiences, roles and perspectives, with representation from 22 of 24 work sectors within state government. The evaluation began with content analysis of the policy to understand eligibility guidelines, compensation rates and the duration of the benefit.

The ISPD shared information about the project and survey links in issues of the State's newsletters, *The Torch* and *Around the Circle*. The surveys were open for a three-week period in January and February of 2024. Over the course of the surveying period, 74 supervisors and 187 parents who had experience with the benefit completed the surveys. The Survey Monkey tool was used for data collection and analysis.

Finally, the team conducted interviews with supervisors and parents to get deeper information about participants' experiences with the benefit. The team conducted 14 interviews with workplace supervisors and 44 interviews with parents. Interview participants were compensated for their time with a \$40 gift card to a community grocery store.

The interviews were conducted and transcribed through the Zoom platform. The team made light revisions to correct transcription errors, to subtract repeated words and to reduce the use of non-substantive filler words including, "like," "um," "you know," and "really." Final transcripts were uploaded to the Nvivo platform for data analysis. Two team members reviewed 25% of the interview samples and collaborated to develop the coding framework. The lead author then used the framework to review the remaining transcripts, assign codes and write the summary report.

SURVEYS

74

SUPERVISORS

187

PARENTS

INTERVIEWS

14

SUPERVISORS

44

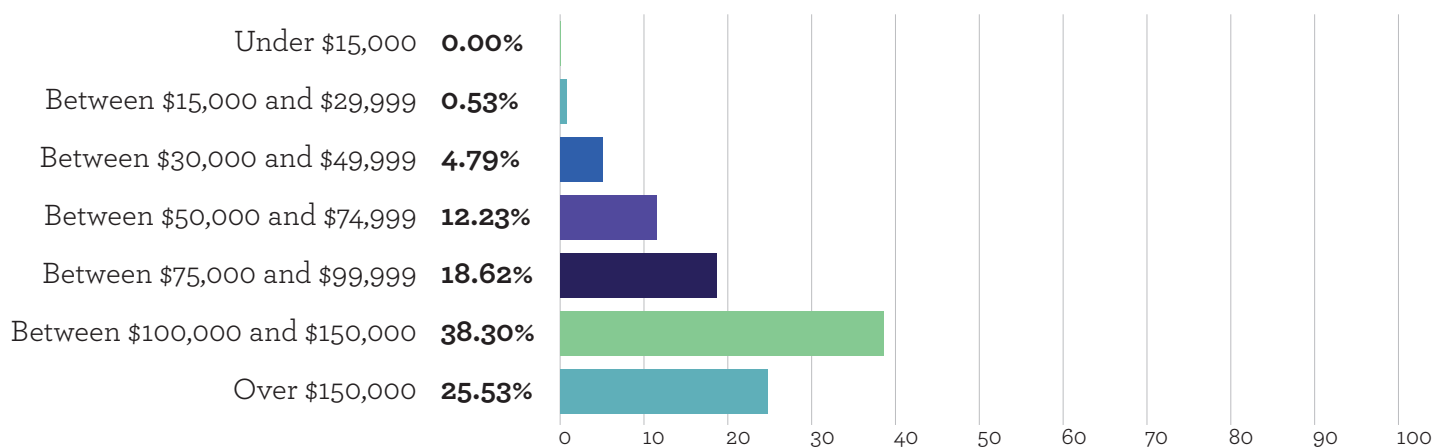
PARENTS

Limitations

ICADV used convenience sampling in recruiting eligible participants for the project. The survey respondents were representative of diverse workplace settings, parenting roles and perspectives on the NPL benefit, but we observed limitations in the sample.

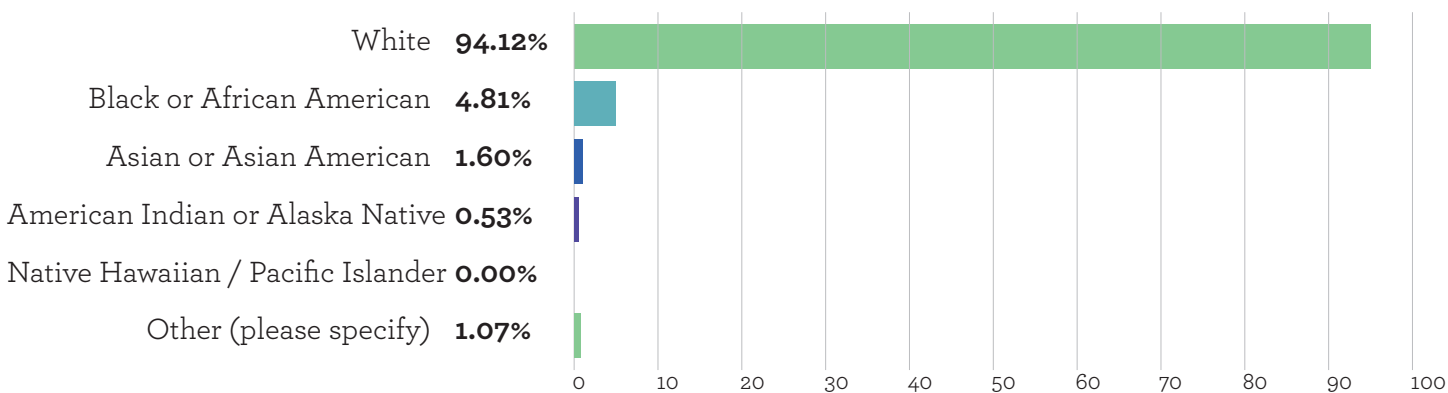
- Though both full and part-time employees are eligible for the NPL benefit (and were invited to participate in the evaluation), nearly all of the survey respondents identified as full-time employees (98% of the sample). Possible reasons for this response could be that full-time employees were more likely to use the NPL benefit, they were more likely to receive information about the survey opportunity, and/or that they were more likely to have time to complete the survey.
- Perhaps related to the full-time sample, most of the respondents reported middle to high levels of household income with 83% of the sample reporting household income of over \$75,000 per year.

What is your approximate, annual household income?



- Racial representation among survey respondents was also limited — a significant majority (94%) identified as white.

Please indicate your racial identity(ies). If you identify as more than one race, you may check more than one box.



- Finally, 93% of respondents reported being in a co-parenting relationship with a spouse or partner. Findings from single parents who used the benefit are limited.



Policy Overview

There is great variability in PFL policies across the states and organizations that have adopted the benefit. The State of Indiana's policy is constructed in a way that supports broad utilization. Key factors include the fact that eligibility is broadly defined to include the delivering parent, the spouse of the delivering parent and adoptive parents. Full and part-time employees who meet the tenure guidelines are eligible for the benefit, and they are compensated at their full pay rate for their leave hours — this helps to ensure that lower wage earners can afford to take the time. Parents expressed appreciation for the flexibility of the benefit that allowed them to use leave hours up to six months after the qualifying event.

Eligibility Terms

- Full and part-time employees who have been employed for six or more consecutive months in state service.
- Employee who gives birth to a child.
- Spouse (legally married husband or wife) of an employee who gives birth to a child.
- Employee upon the adoption of a child.

Duration and Timing

- Full-time employees in permanent positions may use up to 150 hours of NPL time.
- Part-time employees in permanent positions may use up to 75 hours.
- The benefit must be used within the first 6 months of the qualifying event. Time not taken prior to the six-month mark, or prior to leaving government service is forfeited.
- Leave may be used in intermittent increments, but each increment must be a full work day/shift.

Employee Obligations

- Notify supervision of anticipated qualifying event and timing.
- Apply for FML and NPL.
- Provide supportive documentation of qualifying event.
- Document and track use of NPL (timesheets); not exceeding allowable hours.

FINDINGS

Workplace Impacts

Both supervisors who oversaw team members' use of NPL and parents who used the policy were invited to report on the impacts the benefit had for their work and their workplace. Respondents were asked to discuss how the availability of NPL affected workplace productivity, costs, retention and morale. These questions were posed to supervisors through the survey and interview questions. Parents who used the NPL benefit were asked in interviews to describe how they were supported in using the benefit, how their leave impacted their workplace, and how the use of the benefit affected their feelings about their work.

Supervisor Surveys and Interviews

The supervisors who participated in the survey and interviewing processes were diversely representative in terms of workplace type and size.

Survey

Of the 91 supervisors who responded to the survey request, 74 reported that they had supervised an employee who had used the NPL benefit. Among these respondents, 62 answered all or most of the survey questions; their responses are reported in the survey findings.

- Supervisors who completed the survey served in a broad range of governmental settings with representation of 19 out of the 24 sectors within Indiana State Government including participants from business and financial operations, environment and natural resources, executive leadership, public health and safety, human and social services, law enforcement and protective services, and transportation.
- The supervisors reported serving within settings where they supervised 1-100 employees, but the significant majority (89%) were supervising 1-25 employees.

Interviews

Fourteen supervisors, representing nine sectors of state government, participated in individual interviews. These supervisors served in diverse settings including transportation, workforce development, child services, courts, disability rights, the state museum and library, and the state police.

Utilization Rates

One consideration regarding the burden of administering a parental leave policy is the frequency with which employees request to use the benefit. Supervisors reported utilization rates for an average year. As was predictable, supervisors serving in settings with more employees fielded more requests, but the significant majority of supervisors reported overseeing fewer than three employee requests each year.

- **97%** of supervisors reported that 1-3 employees use the benefit in an average year.
- **3%** reported that 4-7 employees use the benefit, annually.

In addition to the annual requests, we asked supervisors to report how many NPL leave requests they had administered during their entire tenure in the supervisor role.

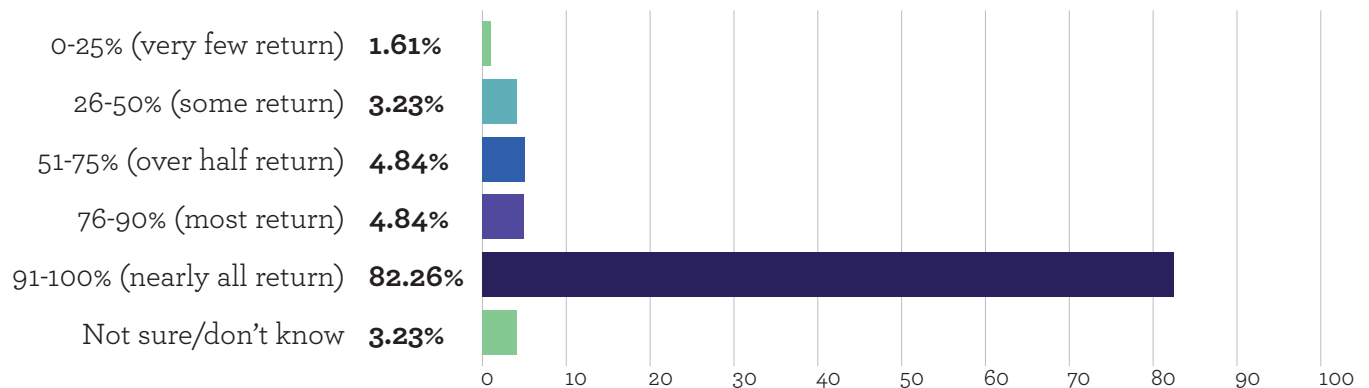
- **92%** reported that they had administered 1-5 NPL requests during their tenure.
- **6.5%** reported that they had administered 6-10 requests.
- **1.5%** reported that they had administered 11-25 requests during their tenure.



Retention

A perceived benefit of parental leave policies for employers is evidence showing that policies like these increase employee loyalty and retention^{19,20}. Supervisors reported that a strong majority of their team members returned to work after using new parent leave.

We are interested in worker retention. Approximately what percentage of the employees who used the NPL benefit returned to their position in your workplace after taking leave time?



In interviews supervisors reported that the benefit helped with retention because it met many employees' needs, and because it fostered workplace loyalty. Supervisors said:

“ I just think it’s awesome. I think it’s amazing that the State is offering it. If they want to offer more. That’s great. It doesn’t even affect me, but I just think it just helps with everything for the future, and the more that we do to help employees wellness. It helps to attract and retain the newer generation. The newer generation is not a ‘We’re gonna keep this job and never leave.’ They are not that, so the more benefits we have for their wellness, the more that you’re gonna attract and retain good employees.”

“ I think that was absolutely a factor in her moving from the private sector to the public sector. You know, really being committed to the public sector, probably for the rest of her career.”

“ All in all, it allowed us to keep good employees so that they didn’t have to quit their job.”

“ I think it’s great. That’s just another benefit for the employee. I think there’s been a lot of strides in the last few years to make working here more flexible. You know, with that and remote work, and some of the flexible policies. It’s just one of the benefits for working for the State.”

Many parents who used the benefit reiterated this perspective about loyalty and retention in their interviews. Parents said:

“That’s one of the reasons why I’ve stuck by my office so long is because of my direct supervisor, is just so understanding, and was helpful and willing to do whatever needed to be done. Especially during that time when we first adopted our daughter. She said, do what you need to do. You know, bond, do what you gotta do, and we’ll make it work.”

“I was happy to come back to work because I knew that, you know, if something was to happen, they kind of have my back in life.”

“This was my second child, but my only one I’ve had with the State. I was at (another employer) before, and they did not offer any sort of paid leave. And I actually ended up leaving during my maternity leave, because I mean that factored into me leaving. I was just kinda like, well pardon, but screw this place like they don’t value me at all.”

“Hey, look what I get over here at the State of Indiana, and that probably makes other people think, huh! I wonder if there are any jobs there? That’s a great benefit.”

Burden and Costs

Concerns about the costs and burden of administering PFL policies are barriers frequently cited by decision makers considering adopting such policies. Supervisors were asked to report whether and how employees’ use of the NPL benefit affected their program’s workload and bottom line. A strong majority of supervisors described the burdens of navigating NPL as minimal and reported that the benefits to the employee and workplace were significantly greater than the burdens.

Where challenges were identified, many supervisors described how they navigated those challenges within their sector and offered recommendations for things that the state personnel department (SPD) could do to help streamline the process. Additionally, supervisors identified unexpected benefits in navigating leave time. Several indicated that planned NPL absences prompted cross-training that helped them maintain workplace functions when employees were away for vacation time and emergent, unplanned absences.

“We actually make sure that every team member knows how to do every job in the event that you know someone goes on, maternity leave or medical leave, or if they just leave altogether we don’t have anyone that’s just doing one particular thing, and nobody else knows how to do it, so it was easy for them to kind of pick up where she was and to keep going, so there wasn’t a gap in anything that we were doing.”

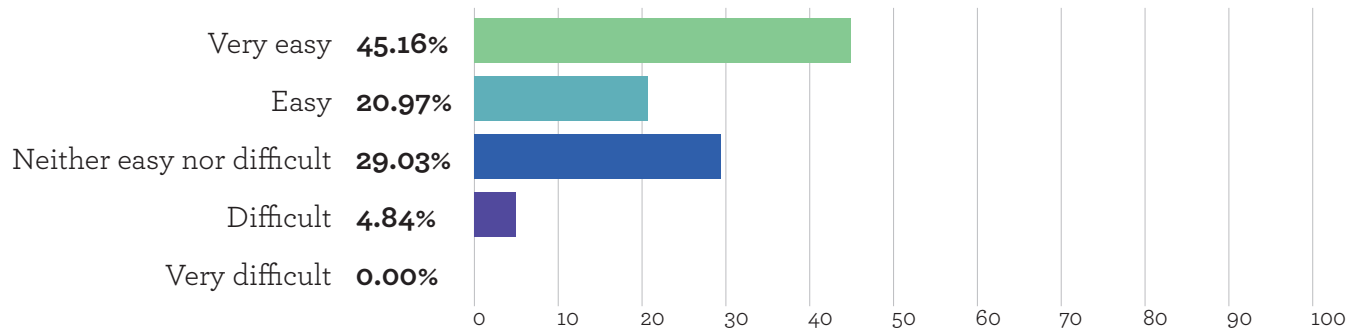
“I was able to take care of his role, and that helped me because I was able to learn new things about the job. I had not been there for more than a year myself, and that helped me tremendously to learn new things on the fly.”



Burden

A strong majority of respondents indicated that administering the NPL leave policy did not constitute a significant burden in their work with 66% of respondents reporting that the leave was either very easy or easy to administer.

How significantly would you rate the burden of administering employees' use of the NPL benefit (paperwork)?



In discussing the administrative burden, supervisors reported that the paperwork was managed by the SPD, so the burden was minimal for them. Some supervisors reported burden was created where they didn't have sufficient training about the policy to help guide employees through questions about eligibility and filing the appropriate paperwork.

“ Apparently, they rolled out the policy and have like a fact sheet on it. But when it comes to the nitty gritty of applying, and what documentation is needed, and how it goes into the system, and how time sheets are processed, and all of that doing new parent leave there's just been zero training on that, and so I think that would be an area SPD should definitely focus on.”

“ I feel like there's often some scrambling, trying to figure it out, and the policy and best practice of how it should be utilized. So, I think that if there can be additional information, or maybe a guidance document or something of how it should be utilized and how it should be approved by the manager.”

“ So I would say the greatest challenge for me personally, as a supervisor hasn't even been covering for the employees who have been out. It's the fact that the State Personnel Department hasn't trained supervisors in regard to the policy. So I still don't know like what kind of paperwork I'm gonna need to fill out and what to ask for when my employee comes back.”

Workloads

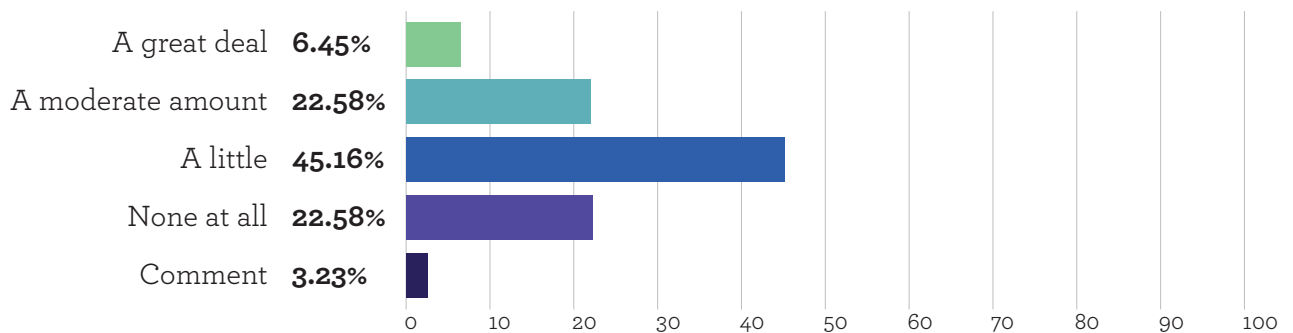
Supervisors were asked to report on the degree to which employees' use of the NPL benefit affected their workload, and also the degree to which it affected other team members' workloads.

Supervisors' Workloads

Most supervisors indicated that the impact of employees' leave on their personal workloads was minimal. They observed that their employees were eligible for unpaid leave through the federal Family and Medical Leave Act prior to the adoption of the New Parent Leave benefit, so most already had experience in covering staff leave time.

“Employees are entitled to take FML anyway, so my workload would be impacted the same way if NPL weren't offered.”

How significantly did the absence of employees using the NPL benefits affect your workload?



In discussing the burden of covering for team members using leave, supervisors emphasized how valuable pre-planning was for managing the workload. They indicated that because the timing of parental leave was somewhat predictable, they had the opportunity to work with their colleagues to plan for the absence. They praised those using NPL for the pre-leave work that they did to proactively manage deadlines and to leave clear instructions about responsibilities that would need to be handled by colleagues during their absence.

“Unlike other types of medical leave where you know it's coming. You can put things into place, and, you know, sort of divide the duties.”

“I would say the employee herself did a really great job of prepping for her leave, making sure all of her big projects were done, and then leaving me really good notes for things that might come up while she was out. So it was really we missed her. We definitely missed her, but we were still fully operational while she was away.”

“Typically, what we're working with isn't so time sensitive that we can't adapt to those changes. And normally, we can anticipate the new parent leave coming with, I don't know, 9 months in advance, so to speak. So we have time to anticipate the time that the individual will be taking off. So it really isn't anything we can't work with.”



Parents interviewed reiterated the importance of pre-planning to minimize the burden placed on their team members and to facilitate the continuity of their work. They described efforts to assess their workflow, to complete large projects prior to their leave, to leave notes to guide colleagues through emergent work, and to proactively communicate with team members to prepare for the leave. Parents said:

“ I did prep really well before I left. I had finished everything that was needed for every big project that was going to come up. And so they were able to go through with hardly any issues.”

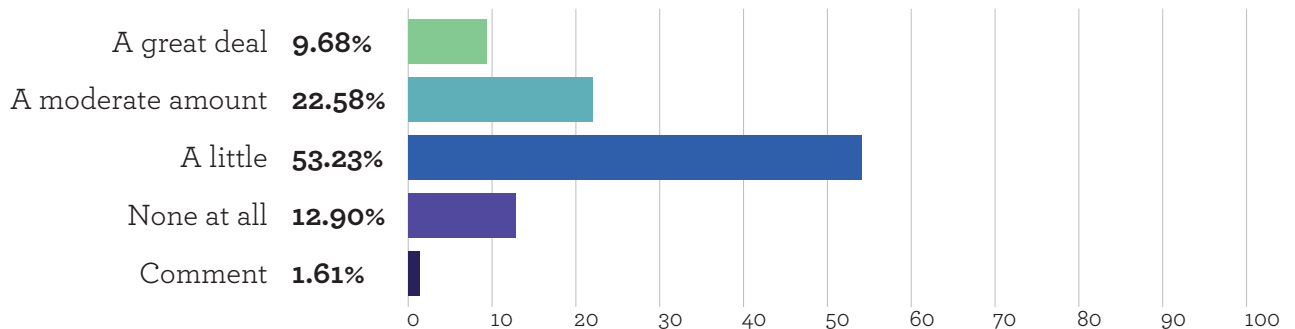
“ I did make a really robust leave plan. I cross trained some people on some tasks that need to be covered, created some standard operating procedures, you know, some documentation things in writing, etc.”

“ I think my boss and I had a good communication, so we were able to communicate back and forth what needs to be done, and when it needs to be done. I think that the key is communicating with your boss.”

Team Members' Workloads

Supervisors were asked to report on the impacts that covering work responsibilities for colleagues taking NPL time had on the rest of their team. The majority reported that these impacts were minor.

How significantly did the absence of employees using the NPL benefit affect your team members' workloads?



Supervisors of smaller teams reported that it was sometimes difficult for them to cover all of the responsibilities, which sometimes necessitated shifting in timelines and/or the number of work deliverables.

“ It was a bit of a struggle, because I have a small team. And so, having to kind of make up the work from someone else not being there...but I mean overall, I was just happy that she was able to have that time.”

“ Yeah, it's not easy, necessarily, but I think just the importance of having that opportunity to spend the time with your family, outweighs any of the challenges.”

Parents working within small teams had similar observations about the work disruption created by their absence — they acknowledged that it was tough for small teams with distinct responsibilities to maintain the workload during their absence.

“ We have a very small department...at that time we had eight people. So without me, and without the other guy, we’re down to six. To have six people do the tasks for everyone is just a lot. So I think on their end, they just pick up what they can, and do what they could.”

Though acknowledging the inherent burden in covering an absent colleague’s responsibilities, supervisors consistently reported that their team members were very supportive throughout the process and collaborated to get the work done.

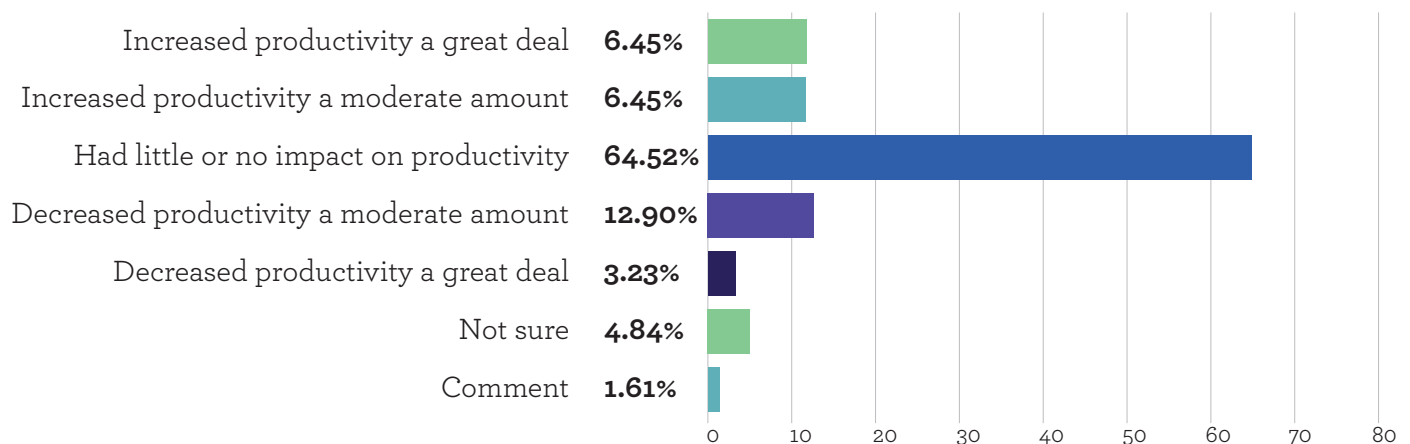
“ Everybody had to be like a sports team. Everybody had to pitch in and do things. We didn’t hire any temps or anything. We all had to pitch in and do what was needed. I have a great team; they had no issues with it.”

“ Supervisors and staff are very accepting of the benefit and are overall happy to provide any additional short-term coverage for those using the benefit. Culturally, it is viewed as highly important and a priority over any short-term regular work duties. It is easy to plan ahead, in most cases well in advance for the anticipated absence. Employees using the benefit have worked very effectively at planning ahead workload wise for their expected absence and provided any training to staff who will cover for them during this time.”

Productivity

Supervisors were asked to describe how employees’ use of the NPL benefit affected their overall workplace productivity. As the chart below depicts, a strong majority reported that the use of the benefit had little or no impact on their workplace productivity (65%); and additional 13% of the sample reported that the benefit resulted in increased productivity within their workplace.

How did employees’ use of the NPL benefit affect productivity, overall, within your workplace?



A significant majority of supervisors reported that the NPL had positive or neutral effects on workplace productivity. Supervisors observed that the temporary absence of an employee inevitably had impacts on their workplace productivity, particularly for small teams. However, many supervisors reported that increases in loyalty, camaraderie and morale resulted in increased productivity, particularly among employees returning from NPL.



“For this department, the biggest challenge was just that we weren’t able to process as many applications as we have been with her being there, you know. But we try to make it work and keep going. I don’t want anyone to ever feel like they are a problem in the department because of their health, or because they’re having a baby or anything like that. So it was difficult, but manageable.”

“I think it helped my employee be able to be more focused and committed each time she returned from NPL.”

“When she came back, like she was doing more than what she did before. So you know, she was eager to get back to work, and ready to work. I mean, of course, she didn’t want to leave her son, but she was excited to come back to work.”

Parents’ responses echoed those from supervisors. Many reported returning to work feeling energized, supported, and eager to pay it forward by working hard for their teams.

“The new parent leave just is good. It’s great, it makes me happy. It makes me feel appreciated. It makes me feel valued, and when I feel that way, I do better work.”

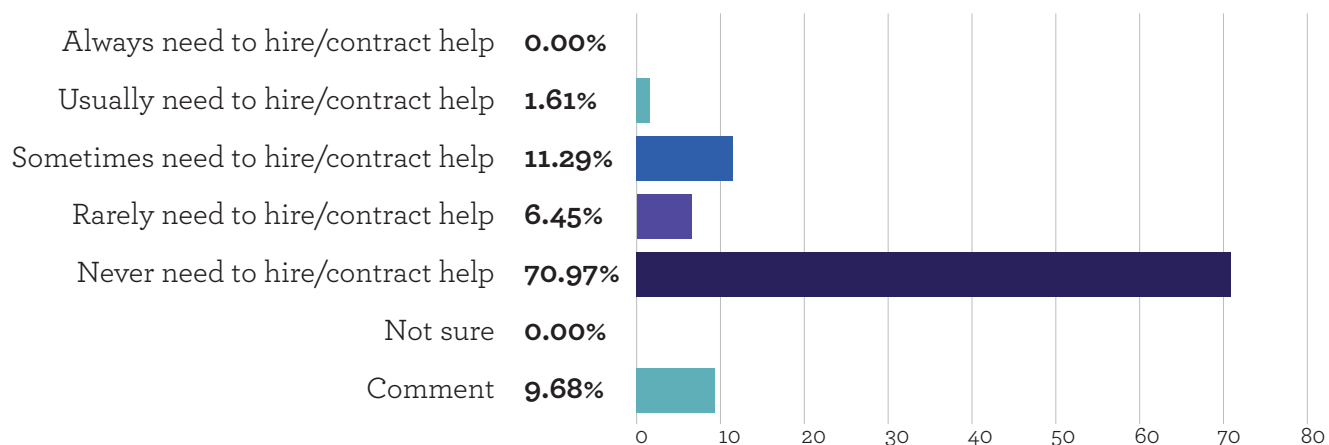
“I came back feeling very refreshed, very rejuvenated. The terminology we generally use to say ‘my batteries were recharged’, so batteries are definitely recharged. I was ready to just hit the ground running.”

“I was like, I was able to do all this. Let me go back to work. So the guy who just, or the lady, or whoever’s about to have a baby. I’m gonna go in and bust my butt, to make sure that they’re able to get the same care and attention that I got.”

Staffing Leave

Supervisors were asked to report if they generally needed to hire temporary staff to cover work responsibilities during an employee’s NPL absence. A significant majority (71%) never needed to hire temporary staff.

In general, when a member of your team is using paid parental leave time, have you needed to hire temporary staff to cover their responsibilities, or has your team been able to cover the work?



In the comments, some supervisors indicated that an additional, temporary hire was not allowed within their workplace. Others reported that it would be very difficult to find someone for a temporary position with the particular skills needed for their workplace. The majority reported that their team was able to manage the work, for some, this meant delays or longer timeframes for projects. They said:

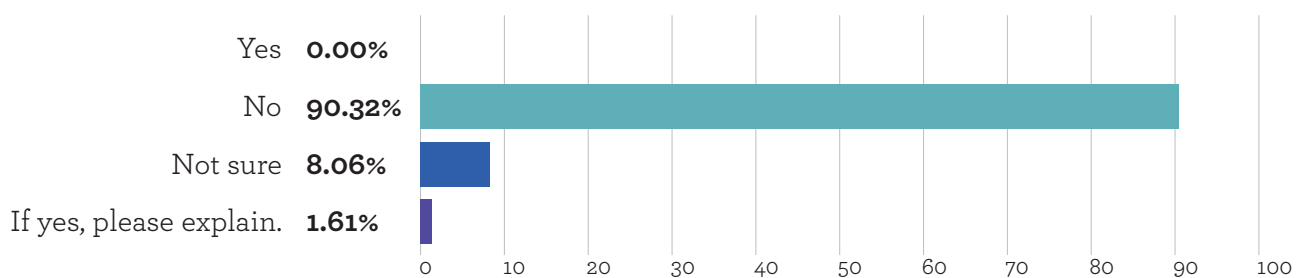
“ We wouldn’t be able to get approval for the extra funds to hire contract help to cover while people are off on paid leave.”

“ With the role and responsibilities of my staff hiring temporary staff is NOT an option. It’s not possible for a temp to acquire the needed skills to perform the job my staff do.”

Additional Costs

Supervisors were asked to report if they incurred any additional workplace costs in covering staff’s use of NPL. Nearly all reported that they either had not or were unaware of any additional costs.

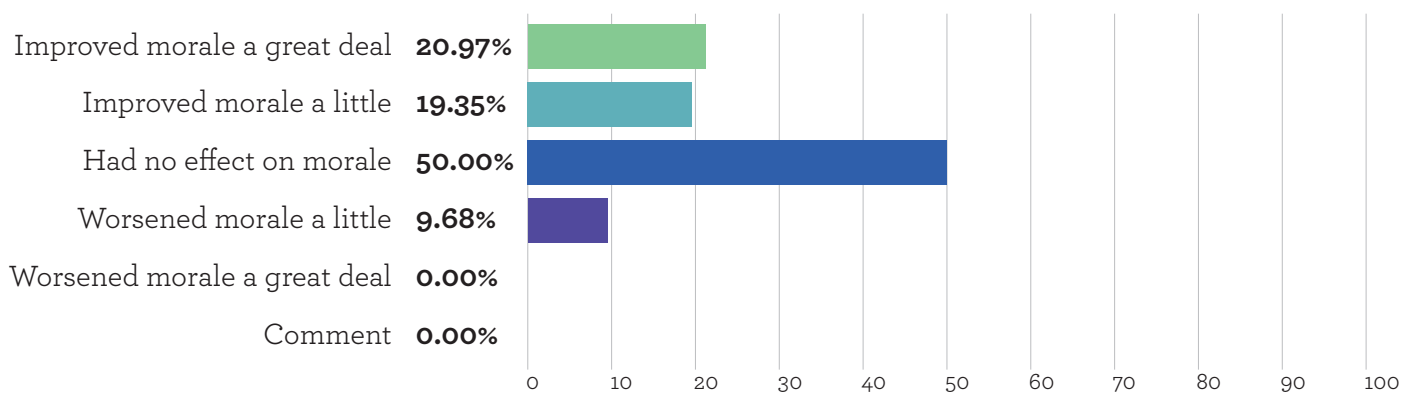
Did you incur any other costs related to employees’ use of the NPL benefit?



Morale

Supervisors were asked to report how the use of NPL affected morale among members of their team. For a strong majority (90%) the effects were either positive or neutral. Ten percent of supervisors reported that morale was a little worse.

How did employees’ use of the NPL benefit affect morale among members of your team?



In discussing team morale, supervisors often observed that many members of their team were also parents. Some of them had also been able to use the NPL benefit, others had their families before the benefit was enacted, but most understood the need for supported time away, and were enthusiastic about making the work “work” during the new parent’s absence.



“ There are a lot of parents on our team. So, I think everybody sort of feels like they’ve been there. And the policies are much more generous than they were when we were having our kids. So, I think that they’re really happy to have the opportunity to kind of help out and pay it forward in that way.”

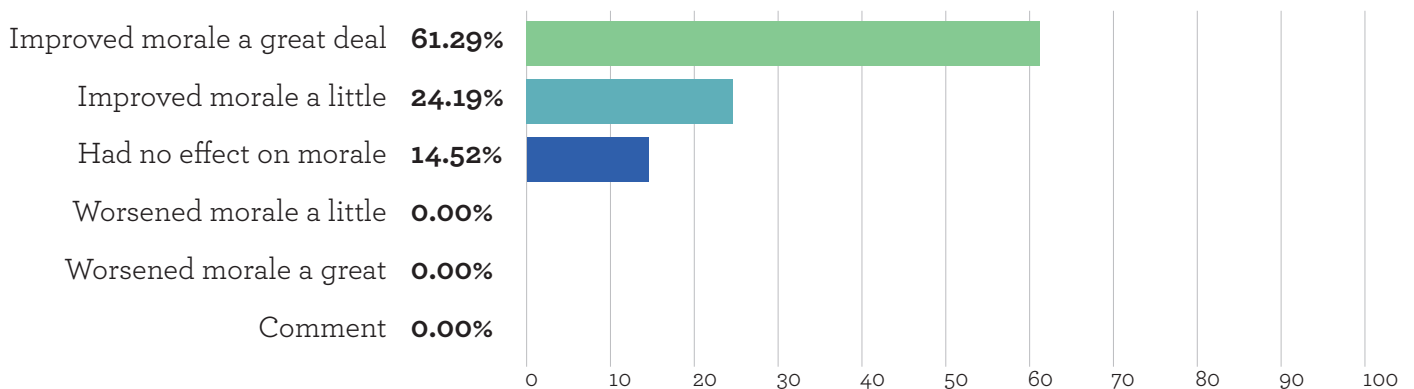
“ I believe that new parent leave is a great benefit to state employees. My team has used it several times since 2018 and it has only increased morale on those who have used it.”

Morale among employees who used the New Parent Leave benefit – Supervisors were asked to report effects on morale among parents who used the benefit. For a strong majority (85%), morale was increased. No declines in morale were observed among parents who used the NPL benefit. In describing benefits related to staff morale, supervisors reported that their team members appreciated that their employer supported a healthy work-life balance and cared about them as people beyond just their abilities within the workplace.

“ It has also helped her morale by showing her that her employer cares about her and her family, even outside of the workplace.”

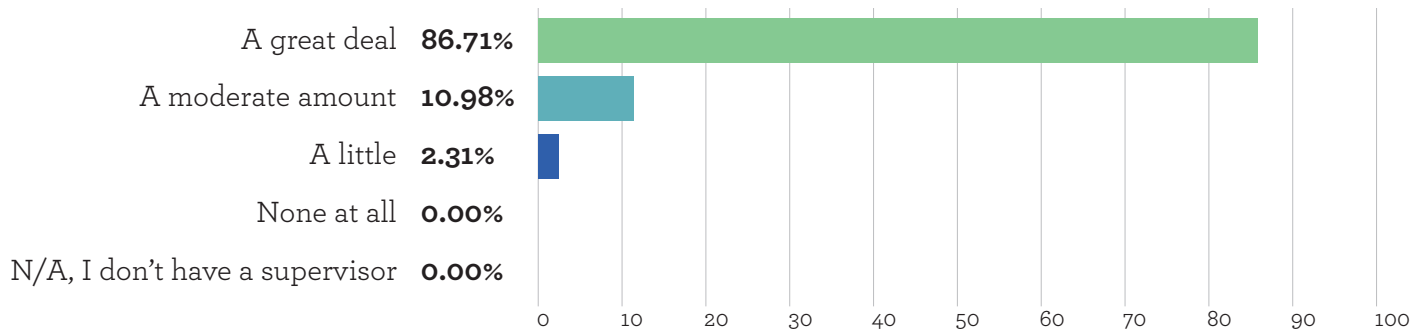
“ Where they’re not stressed about anything, you know. So, it’s easy to kind of jump back in and knowing that being out didn’t negatively impact anyone or anything...we welcomed her with, you know, open arms, and we were excited that she was back. I think that had a lot to do with her mentality of coming back as well.”

How did the availability of the NPL benefit affect morale among employees who used that benefit?

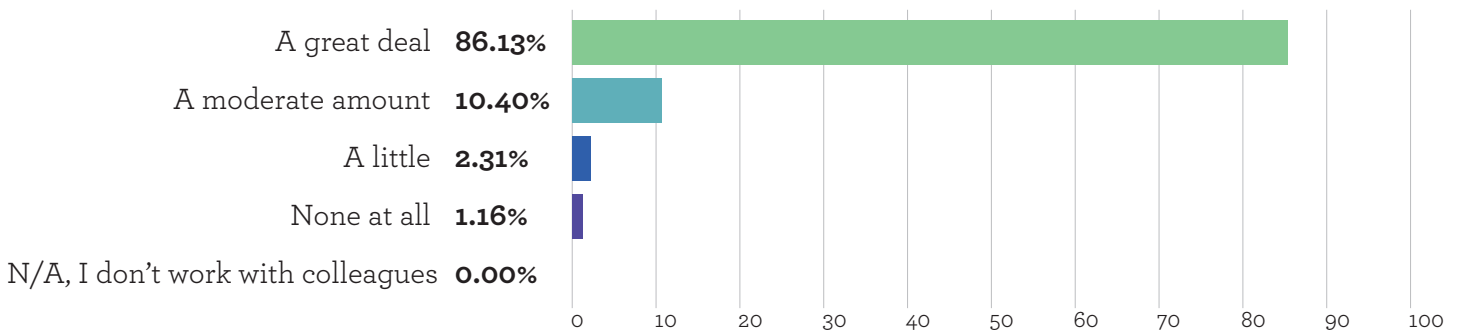


Parents reported their feelings of workplace morale were fostered by supervisors and colleagues who supported them – emotionally and logistically – in taking their leave time. In the survey, over 95% of parents reported that they felt very supported by their supervisors and colleagues in using the NPL benefit.

To what degree did your supervisor support you in taking time off?



To what degree did your colleagues support you in taking time off?



In interviews, parents described the supports that they received for using their NPL time.

“But everyone was just happy for me, and very supportive...They threw a baby shower for me, a surprise baby shower before I left. It truly was a surprise like, oh, so we have a surprise conference, and da da da. They come in there and like surprise there are balloons, and they had little games, and I got, you know, tons of cases of diapers. It was very touching, and we went through those diapers.”

“My colleagues were very supportive of my leave...if anything they were just upset because they didn't get more baby pictures.”

“My work is able to plan ahead and work with me so that the work is still getting done right. The expectations at work are still getting met, and then my family's needs are still getting met. It's just made the work, life, balance, incredibly better.”

“I don't know how it is for other agencies or anything, but my employer is very family-friendly. So, being able to come back and use the time to make sure I had time to pump, and all that stuff...I've just been very lucky to have this position.”

Family impacts

Parent Surveys and Interviews

Parents

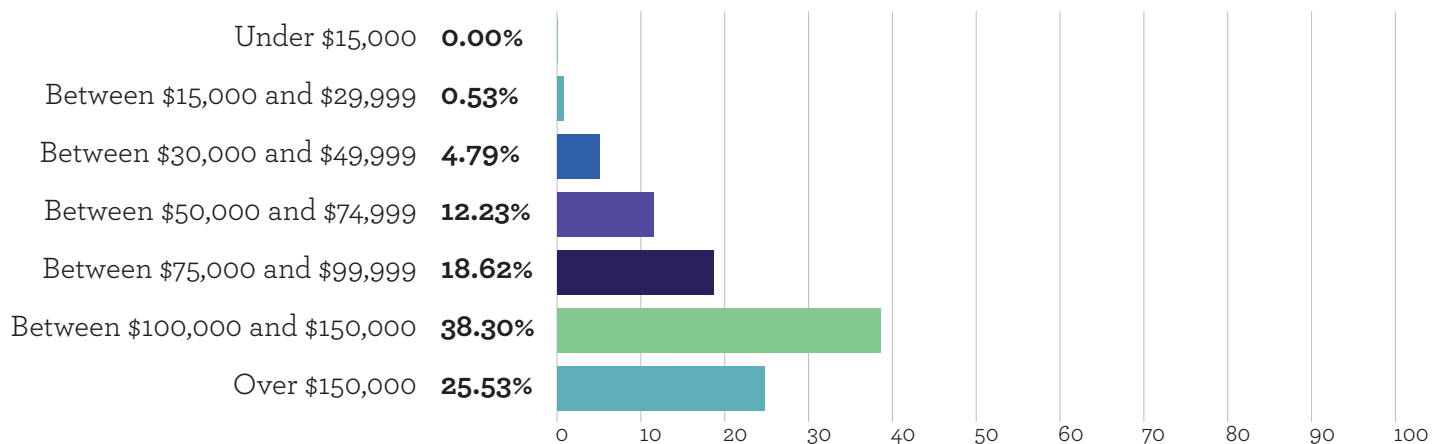
The parents who participated in the survey and interviewing processes were diversely representative in terms of workplace type, income, family structure and parenting roles. We asked how the availability of the NPL benefit affected their household economic stability, family relationships, parenting skills, and any impacts they observed related to their work.

Survey Sample

A total of 202 parents who had been eligible for NPL responded to the survey; among these, 187 respondents answered most or all of the survey questions. Their responses are reported in the survey findings.

- These parents served in a broad range of governmental settings with representation of 20 out of the 24 sectors within Indiana State Government. The sectors with the greatest representation included Business and Financial Operations, Environment and Natural Resources, Human and Social Services, Transportation, and Legal.
- Survey respondents were mostly white (94%); 5% of respondents identified as Black; 1.5% identified as Asian American, .5% identified as Native American, and 1% selected other identities. The sample was similarly limited in ethnic diversity; 3% of respondents identified as Hispanic; 97% did not identify as Hispanic.
- Most respondents were full-time employees (98%), with annual household incomes at or above \$75,000.

What is your approximate, annual household income?



- We heard from parents with many diverse parenting experiences. Survey respondents included mothers (69%), fathers (30%) and non-binary parents (1%). Throughout the interviewing process, we heard from parents who welcomed their child through birth and from adoptive parents.
- A strong majority of parents reported that they had used NPL one time (69%), 28% had used it twice, and just 3% indicated that they had used the benefit three times. Interestingly, many parents reported on the survey and in interviews that they had welcomed their older children before the policy was implemented. They were able to provide perspective on how their lives worked with and without the NPL benefit.
- Nearly all of the respondents (96%) reported that they were a two-parent household co-parenting with their spouse or partner. Two percent of respondents identified as a single parent, and two percent reported that they were co-parenting with a parent who lived in another location.

- A strong majority of respondents (91%) reported that they used all of the NPL hours that were available to them; 5% reported that they used some of their allotted hours. The 4% of the sample who indicated not using any NPL time reported that they did so either because they didn't know about the benefit, or because their request for leave time was denied.
- Forty-three percent of the sample reported that their co-parent also had some paid parental leave time, but 57% indicated that they were the only one with any paid parental leave.

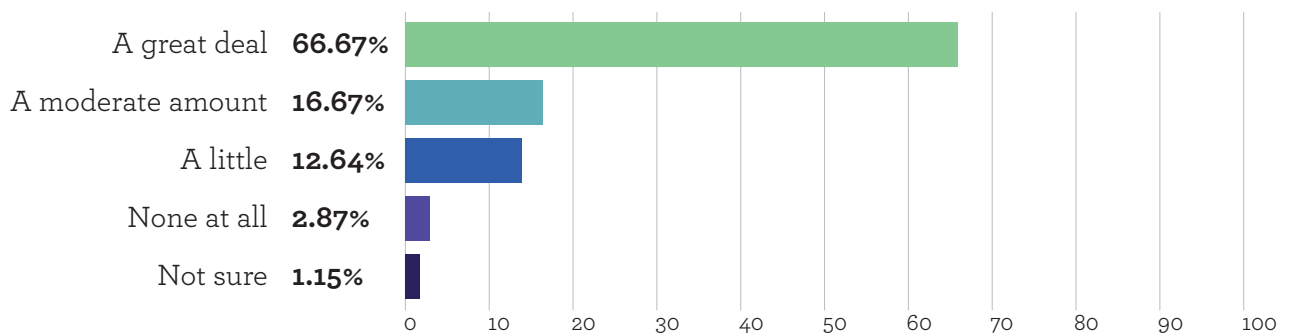
Interviews

In designing the evaluation, our team planned to conduct 15-20 interviews with parents to complement the survey data with deeper stories about families' experiences with the benefit. We were surprised by the enthusiastic response that we received with over 60 interview offers within the first few days of the announcement. With this, we were able to hear from a broad sample of parents working in settings including tourism, the Indiana Lottery, the Attorney General, the Indiana Secretary of State, the State Police Lab, and the Departments of Health, Environmental Management, Mental Health and Addictions, Education, and Revenue. We conducted 44 interviews with 32 parents who identified as mothers and 12 who identified as fathers.

Financial Stability and Stress

Overwhelmingly, both in the surveys and interviews, parents reported that financially supported leave time increased their household economic stability. A strong majority (84%) of survey respondents reported that the benefit impacted their economic stability a great deal or to a moderate amount. Similar positive results were reported around feelings of financial stress.

To what degree did having paid parental leave impact your family's economic stability?



In interviews, parents highlighted how critical economic stability was for their families as they were navigating new parenting. Parents who had other children without any paid leave benefits compared those distinct experiences and how they affected their income and stress.

“When I had my first, I was just working at an hourly job, so I didn't have any paid leave at all. So that was really just our savings over those 9 months. I only took 9 weeks off with my first, because I had to go back to work. So, I got more time off, and then just the peace of mind that there would be some income coming in. There was just less stress while I was off for sure and just helping covered expenses. So, I'd say the experiences were vastly different.”

“If it was still the old policy, we would have been probably destitute right now. So, it was very nice to have that in place.”



“It had an incredibly positive impact. I’ve got a toddler at home this time, and we would have had to pull him out of daycare because we wouldn’t have been able to afford daycare for him, and then we would have lost his spot. Then we would have had to go through the process of adding a new daycare if there is one available to enroll him in. So, it would have created a domino effect of problems.”

Many parents also discussed their co-parent’s income including whether they received any paid parental time, and how that affected their financial stability, as well as availability for sharing parenting responsibilities.

“I am married. But my husband’s on a fixed income, and so even missing a day or two of pay would have been kind of tight for our budget. If that had occurred.”

“It was major, because I didn’t have all of the sick time and vacation time saved up to be able to cover my leave. So, having the new parent leave meant that I did not have reduced income for those weeks. It was extremely important. My husband was unemployed during this time, so it was absolutely vital to our family.”

“That’s definitely when my husband and I had the least amount of money in our careers, and it was a huge boon to be able to have that month of payment because we wanted to take all 3 months off, but it wasn’t feasible until we learned about new parent leave, and all of a sudden I mean, that would get us through. That way we could both take the whole 12 weeks together with him.”

“He qualified for FML and so he took the full 12 weeks off. At the same time I did. In part, we made that decision because I did have this new parent leave. I think if I didn’t, it would have probably been a different conversation.”

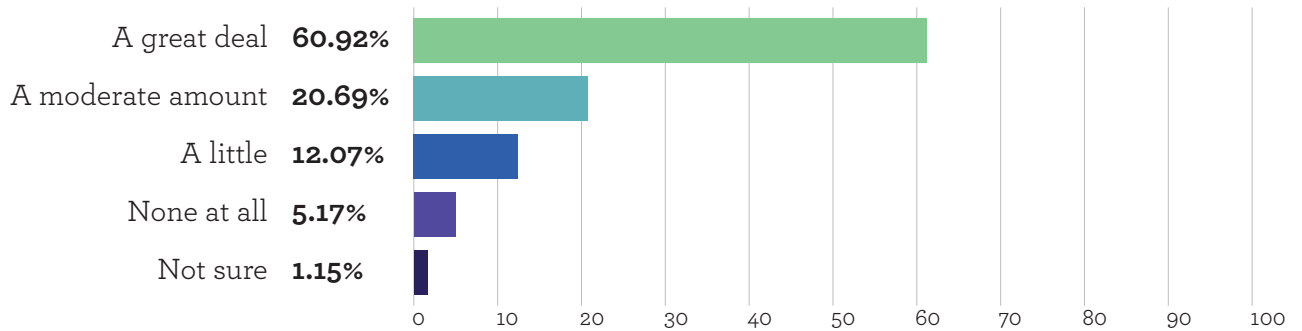
For some parents, concerns about economic instability and the availability of supported leave time were strong considerations in their family planning.

“I will say it was a reason that I felt more secure in family planning. I felt like we could start a family at that point because we had the new parent leave. That would be a financial offset. Because we were trying to figure out, how do I have time off? That may or may not be paid depending on if I have enough PTO, and then we’re also gonna incur daycare costs which are astronomical. So, the new parent leave made it more accessible for us to just have family.”

“I don’t wanna say we fully planned it, because, you know, you have the struggles of trying to get pregnant...But we did try to plan it to where he would be off for the summer, knowing that he doesn’t get that leave so that way I wouldn’t be with two little ones on my own.”

“My partner didn’t have any parental leave or even bereavement leave time. No bonding time for the child. So, we actually planned, I was over my due date, so we planned my induction over a weekend, so that my partner could be there longer with us, and maximize his days off.”

To what degree did the ability to take paid parental leave affect your feelings of financial stress?



Parents discussed the inevitable stress related to welcoming a new child and talked about how stable income reduced one critical category of worry. Parents also told us that stable income in this period helped them to manage other unexpected life challenges and expenses including costs related to healthcare, the COVID-19 pandemic, childcare, and the baby formula shortage.

“Just having that, I wasn’t stressed about the finances. I wasn’t, you know, stressed about making sure my bills were paid. It was good to take that level out because you’re already stressed about taking care of this new baby.”

“As far as economic stress, knowing that I’m having a baby and still getting my full paycheck for that time was awesome. And I can’t imagine, I can’t fathom, being in a place and having a new baby, and not getting paid, or not having time to recover.”

“Especially as a new mom with my son, there’s so many things to be stressed about. And to not have to be stressed about, are we going to have enough money to pay the mortgage? Are we going to have enough money to buy groceries while I’m off. I’m sure it was a tremendous weight lifted, and all I needed to focus on was keeping that tiny human alive which is so much harder than it seems.”

“I think it made a bigger impact because he ended up being in the NICU for two weeks when he was born. So, knowing that I was gonna have income like definitely helped, not stress about him being in the NICU and I felt like I could be there and not have to worry.”

“The formula shortage was going on, and that was scary. There were times when I was able to kind of outright go and scavenger hunt for formula. I wouldn’t have been able to just take the day, or the morning, and drive all around Indianapolis going into stores trying to find formula. You know that was a big deal. It would have been nuts, you know, and then I would have just been expected to try to catch up at work.”



“It was a weird time, too, because of Covid. And all of that like added an extra layer to it. But yeah, I think this removed the stress because I knew for sure I was gonna have two paychecks when I first had the baby. I didn’t have to worry about it because we knew those checks were coming.”

A primary source of stress many parents described was the shortage of daycare spots for infants and high daycare costs. They told us that the economic stability and additional leave time supported by NPL were critical in helping them navigate those challenges.

“We had planned to put him in daycare, and we didn’t have a spot when he was born. I had been on the waitlist since I got pregnant, and that’s just how hard it is to find daycare here.”

“I just think access to childcare, too. We went on the waitlist like the minute we knew we were pregnant. And you have to pay, you know, 100 plus dollars, just to even join the waitlist that you’re never going to get back, and infant spots are so few and far. Because the ratio is very intense. I think it’s like one to four, which I do not disagree with, but that was a big stressor for my daughter. We didn’t have childcare lined up until I think, two weeks before I went back to work, not because we weren’t trying, but there just were no spots anywhere.”

“Daycare is so expensive. And there are certain policies where kids can’t even go into care until a certain age, and you’re getting put on waitlists for daycares.”

Many parents reported that with the availability of NPL, they did not have to exhaust all of their other PTO and vacation time. Knowing that they still had PTO time available after returning to work reduced the stress that they felt about the probability that they would need time off for medical appointments and to care for sick children.

“Ultimately it helped with being able to save time, so that when I came back to work I didn’t have to deplete my banks of accrued leave. So that when the time comes for them to be sick, like it does, I had the time available to do that.”

“My wife was a teacher, so she wasn’t able to take the time off like I can. It was reassuring to know that with the leave I wouldn’t have to mess with any of my sick time, my vacation time and our daughter was sick when she was first born. So, we did have a lot of doctors, appointments that we had to continuously go to, and she had therapy appointments and that kind of stuff. So, it was really nice to be able to take that time off periodically throughout the year without having to worry about who’s gonna take off.”

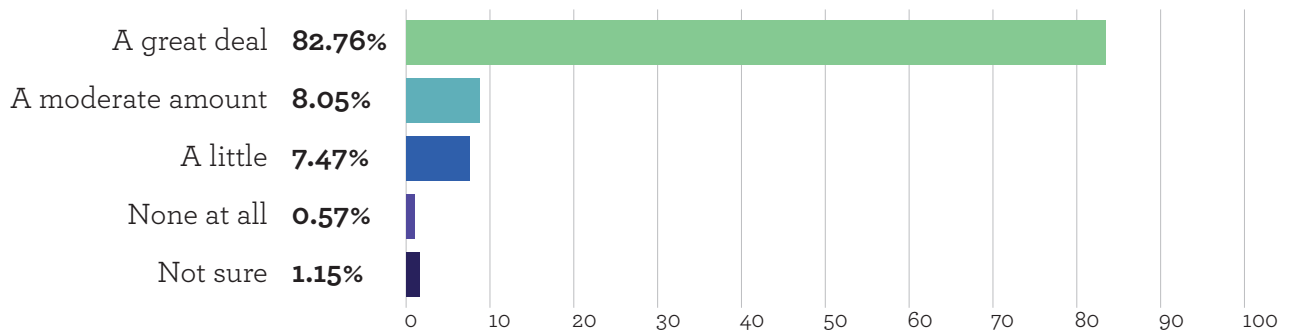
“That’s been a huge blessing to our family. Having those extra day has been incredible, because once my kiddo started daycare, of course he got sick pretty quickly. So, I’m having more appointments for him. Rather than going to appointments on work time, I’m able to do that on my new parent leave days that we’ve already planned ahead.”

Parent/Child Relationships

Bonding

Almost all of the parents surveyed reported that their NPL time supported their ability to bond with their new child.

To what degree did having paid parental leave enable you to bond with your new child?



For many parents who completed the survey and participated in interviews, the space to bond with their new child was the most impactful outcome of the NPL benefit. They told us how important that time was for them, emotionally, and how it helped to form a strong parenting foundation.

“I feel so strongly about that connection. I feel so strongly about being able to have that time to help them grow, to be with them, skin to skin, to help them develop. And just I mean, biologically speaking, we’re not meant to be apart from our babies.”

“The new parent leave helped me make that decision that I could take the full 12 weeks off, and I think that having those 12 weeks to spend and bond and get to know my kids, you know, as these new babies, I think that was huge...I talked with some coworkers who had babies before FML. And you know they were explaining that they had to go back to work after four weeks, and that was kind of the norm. And I think that would be really difficult. Really, you get to spend that time and enjoy that time, and some of it was really hard, so don’t get me wrong. It wasn’t all enjoyment, but I mean getting to bond with both of them for those first 12 weeks, and not have to worry about work, or anything else.”

“I have a really good bond with her, and I think that supported leave was critical. I think, having that time off was critical to being able to really build that bond, and just focus on being a parent is really helpful and really enjoyable.”

“We’ve had her since she was 3 weeks old, so you know, we had that time in between then, but it was nice to be able to do absolutely nothing for a week and just spend time with her, and kind of grow that bond. And let her know that she’s the important one here, and just spend time with just her and I, and then my wife to take a couple of days during that time off. So, she spent time with her as well, but so it was just the 3 of us kind of getting together.”



Fathering

In most of our interviews, mothers identified as the primary caregiver within their family. Many moms reported that their spouse or co-parent didn't have much paid parental time off from work. Birthing parents told us how much co-parenting support meant for their physical and emotional health. Fathers who received NPL reported how much it meant to them to have supported time to bond with their child, to share in parenting responsibilities and to support their partner's wellbeing.

“It's a powerful relationship. And as a father, I was able to spend time more with my kids and spend more time with my wife.”

“To be able to stay at home and not have to worry about using up, you know, running out of PTO immediately, and all that really helps ease the stress and help you build relationships with the kids. With my first child, I was able to take time off, but I had to get back to work pretty quick, and I was the sole breadwinner at the time. So, it was really rough to try to find a work life balance with that.”

“It was great to be able to be home, and get that bonding time. To get to know my child to get to know her; her, to get to know me, 'cause I mean you don't know each other. Just being able to spend all day, every day with her for me was amazing. It was great to be able to be at home.”

“I mean that early bonding time when she is just this tiny little fragile, you know, can't hold her head, and they're just flopping around and me just holding her. I'm sort of crying here, just thinking about it.”

“I administered NPL to a father, who was hesitant to take it. I assured him that we wanted him to use it, that it was his benefit to use in caring for his newborn. He returned to work, with improved engagement, and has since been promoted. I am sure his family was grateful for his ability to be present during that special time.”

Creating and Maintaining Family Bonds

In discussing the benefit, parents described how the time enabled them to form family bonds with the new child and with any other siblings. It also helped them to maintain their attention, care and routine with their other children.

“We were able to have just some extra time, even just as not only parents, but bonding with the new baby, and then bringing in siblings and that sort of thing. We're able to kind of have that cohesive dynamic before we both returned to work.”

“It was very, very helpful. Because we had a 5-year-old running around at the same time, who still wanted to do things as normal. And so, taking turns like you have the baby, I have the child. Let's go and switch things out, or let's do things altogether. That was very, very helpful, and I think part of the reason why our 5-year-old adjusted as well as she did.”

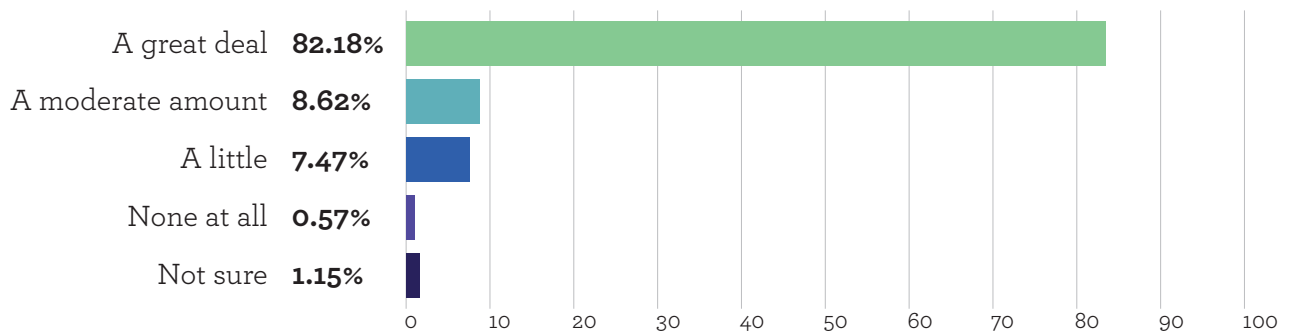
“To know I will have at least 4 weeks of just me and the new baby because that’s just as important to foster that relationship as it is to foster their sibling relationships, and having time to spend just with the siblings.”

“It allowed me to help her with the transition. After nine years of being the only child, it’s an adjustment. So yeah, she definitely needed me to be here more. Not just physically present, but of course, mentally, emotionally, as well.”

Parenting Skill Development

Nearly all of the parents surveyed reported that the NPL time helped enable them to care for their new child. This was particularly true for those who identified as a single parent; all of the respondents who identified as a single parent (7) reported that the availability of the NPL affected their ability to provide care to their new child a great deal.

To what degree did having paid parental leave enable you to provide care for your new child?



Enabling the Development of Parenting Skills and Routines

Parents described how the NPL time gave them the space to learn how to parent as they developed skills and established routines with their new child. As most of the parents interviewed were co-parenting with a spouse or partner, they discussed how they used the time to determine parenting roles and to tag team parenting responsibilities to support one another through periods of exhaustion.

“I think for the first one it just gave me more time to get into a rhythm of being a new mom. And what does this look like, and what works for us, and what doesn’t work for us? And just getting into even a routine.”

“It definitely helps set a good foundation. You’re learning all these things. I think being able to be home that full time during the 4 to 6 weeks there allows you the time and opportunity to really figure out and make sure you’re doing things correctly, and learning these new skills. Whereas instead of you know, being crunched or rushing through things, if you have less time with that child.”

“He was a really good baby like insanely good. I think he realized how little we knew what we were doing. He’s like, I got you.”

Parenting Stress

The parents that we spoke with emphasized that welcoming a new child is simply a stressful time. They discussed worries about household finances, learning how to parent, the whole family's health and navigating exhaustion. Parents reported that NPL reduced the stress that they felt by providing greater financial stability, assuring them that they would have space to figure out the unknowns, and protecting time for rest and healing.

“It’s one little piece of stress that you can take away from a new parent in the most stressful time of your life, right when you have a newborn. So that’s amazing.”

“When I started at the state that wasn’t available. And so, having that added on, and then knowing that eventually I will be starting a family that made that decision a lot easier, a lot more comfortable and a lot less stress. Going in knowing I had those built in four weeks along with any other additional time I felt I needed to take. So having the new parent leave, was pretty critical, and allowed a lot of success in that, especially having a first child and learning all those new things, so without it I probably would have been a mess.”

“During that time you’ve got an infant. You’re not getting more than like two or three hours of sleep at a time, and then you’re still having to think about all these other things that are going on. It’s just overwhelming. I mean to be honest, it was overwhelming, and having benefit time just made it made one less worry.”

“I would say it was both of our first kid. So, we’re kind of both freaking out like, oh, yeah, how’s it going to be? And just me being there with her definitely helped her, made her less stressful. She was able to see that I was helping, and we’re taking care of them. And we rotate shifts cause we’d have to wake up every two hours so someone would be asleep when the other person’s up with the baby.”

“Knowing I had it before I went out, I was really excited. I mean, knowing that I have that time, knowing that it’s going to be paid, was really exciting. It was calming, knowing that I had that time.”

Preventing Abuse

In talking about parenting stress, respondents observed that more support, more rest and less stress meant better parenting. They commented that this helped them to have greater patience in the difficult developmental moments with their child. One respondent directly observed that more support for families was correlated with lower rates of child abuse.

“I think it just overall having less stress as well, obviously it carries over to just having more patience, and being able to deal with you know, not sleeping much, and things like that. There’s already enough to worry about and stress over.”

“Some studies about child welfare, abuse and neglect rates during Covid...In the end we are learning that the abuse and neglect rates have gone down because the support that was offered during Covid was so high, and I kind of look at new parent leave as the same way you’ve got that support to families who have new babies in their home.”

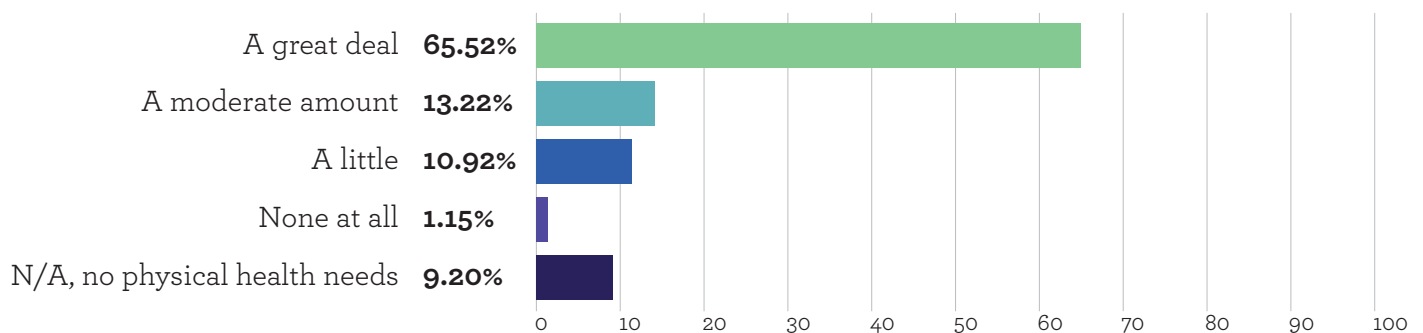
Health benefits

The health benefits of the NPL were frequently discussed by mothers and their co-parents. They reported that the health benefits began even prior to delivery and continued to support their infant’s health in the first months of life. Mothers said that they felt confident in using their PTO for prenatal care because they didn’t feel like they had to save up all of those hours to have paid time off after they delivered their baby. Similarly, where they had PTO remaining after using the NPL, it was easier for parents to take time off work for infant healthcare appointments and to provide care any time their baby was ill.

Maternal Health

Among mothers who reported having any physical health needs after welcoming their new child, 99% reported that the NPL time supported their ability to address those needs. Parents reported that the paid time allowed for physical recovery, rest, attention to mental health needs and facilitated breastfeeding. Mothers reported that the time was critical for their recovery. Where co-parents also had paid leave time, they reported all of the ways that this time enabled them to support their partners’ health.

To what degree did having paid parental leave enable you to take care of your physical health needs after you welcomed a new child?



Maternal Physical health

Delivering mothers described the importance of time to physically recover from that experience; this was particularly important for those who delivered by C-section. Time was critical for many mothers’ physical recovery, but they also reported how essential it was for their co-parent to also have paid leave to help them with infant care and other household responsibilities that they could not manage while healing from surgery.

“Also the healing...my husband is picking up the pieces and areas where I just can’t, because I’m healing from birth. So, it was a huge help to be able to have extra time to heal, and he didn’t have to worry about, how am I going to take care of all the extra things that you can’t while you’re healing as well as work, and everything on top of that.”

“ Like I said, she had a C-section. So, she wasn't really able to move around and do stuff. And she had a slight complication with the C-section so she was in constant pain for a couple of weeks. So, for me to be able to stay home with her without having to worry about how much PTO I was using, and all of that, just both to really relax and enjoy time with (baby). And they own me. And just be able to, you know, take care of each of them. I was able to take care of her and the kids. And it was really nice.”

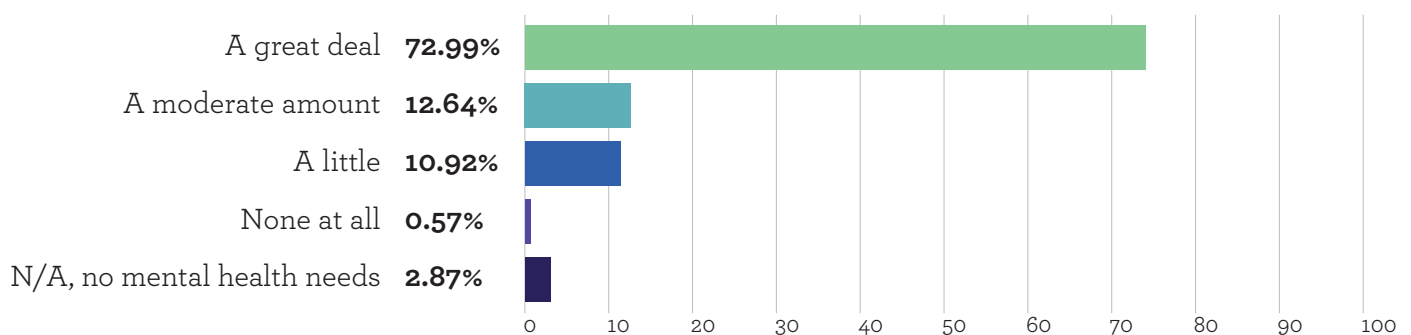
“ She had a C-section, which has a longer recovery time. So the first like four to six weeks she couldn't go up steps, couldn't lift anything heavy, couldn't drive. Can't vacuum, things like that. So, she required a lot of help and assistance changing of bandages on her stomach. Things like that. Because I didn't have to work eight hours a day, plus we'll say another hour to prep and another thirty minutes for commute. So, you're looking at almost ten hours that I had to just solely be in a supportive role. And I didn't have to worry about working, or, you know, finishing any projects off the clock things like that. I could solely focus on what was in front of me, and that was making sure my wife was recovering and looked after.”

“ That was allowing her to rest more so her body could heal as her pregnancy was kind of rough. She was iron deficient before the pregnancy, so she lost a lot of blood, and they're almost giving her a blood transfusion. So, she definitely needed that time to recover.”

Mental Health

Nearly all of the parents surveyed reported that the availability of NPL allowed them to attend to their mental health needs. A significant majority (73 %) reported that the NPL time supported their mental health a great deal.

To what degree did having paid parental leave support your mental health needs after you welcomed a new child?



Mental Health

In interviews both mothers and fathers discussed the ways that paid parental leave time supported their mental health. Mothers reported that the time gave them space to attend to their mental health and to address any concerns. For co-parents, the time allowed them to reduce the birthing parent's stress by sharing parenting and home responsibilities. The time together also enabled co-parents to observe their partner's mental health and to respond to any emerging signs of post-partum depression.

“If I had only been given 4 weeks. I don't think my mental health would have been as stable.”

“He saw the transition from when I had postpartum depression. He was actually the one that kind of, I don't wanna say force because that has a negative connotation, but just kinda like forced me to do something about it. Because I'd gone to my doctor, who basically summed it up to baby blues, and my husband's very even keeled, but he was angry. He was like, no, it is not baby blues. Call your OB right now and tell them what's going on, because this is not okay. And if he hadn't done that I don't know what would have happened because I was having ideations, and it had just become, looking back now, unbearable. But at the time I didn't realize that. So if he hadn't been home, and if he hadn't seen those changes I don't know where we'd be, or if I'd be, because, like I said, he's the one who was like, no, we are not waiting another day. Call right now.”

“Not only did that affect my mental health in a positive way, that in turn obviously affected the relationship that I have with my partner and his mental health as well. I mean like going through hormones and changes, and all of the things. It was nice, knowing that I had that security in that time.”

“I think I think it's good for mental health, too. I mean, there's a lot of very draining things that can happen when these big new changes happen in your family, and being able to get adequate sleep without you know, worrying about things at work is extremely helpful.”



Breastfeeding

In interviews many parents reported that the time away from work supported their ability to breastfeed their new infant. Mothers said that the time enabled them to develop the skill, and to secure an adequate supply of milk. Parents reported that financial stability helped in managing the costs of breastfeeding equipment and supplies. Co-parents reported that the time allowed them to support their partner as they navigated the challenges of breastfeeding.

“Especially as a mom being able to utilize a new parent leave to be able to work on breastfeeding, especially the issues that I had with breastfeeding, and be able to try and work on solving those through the medical system and through just attempts with your kid...I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise. And so that bonding experience was definitely much greater by being able to use new parent leave.”

“I was exclusively pumping for her, so just trying to come up with that routine as well. What does that look like? How does this contraption even work? And figuring that out, because that's really stressful as well. Just like, how am I gonna feed my baby? How is this gonna work?”

“It really did help me feel like I was able to contribute. And at that time my wife was trying to do the breast-feeding stuff, and that was tough on her. But me being able to be there, gave her those windows of time for sleep, and to breathe and stuff, and I took night shifts.”

“We found out there were things we needed like the storage bottles and things like that for my milk and the pouches, and these things we didn't know until after the baby was born. Because we had that extra money, we were able to buy the breast milk bags that went with my pump and so it made it easier to breastfeed, and it made it easier to kind of stay on top of our housework, since we didn't have to say, where's this money gonna come from? We still had income for the first month, basically, and were able to buy those things as we needed them.”

Infant Health

Parents reported that their NPL time made it easier for them to attend all of their new child's healthcare appointments, and where the NPL benefit allowed them to retain some of their other PTO, they were able to take time off of work if their child got sick.

“Being able to go to those appointments is very important to me. So it was nice to have that time to use it, I think I could use it up until they turned 6 months. So, I had that to use kind of whenever she had colds or it was also during Covid at that point in time as well.”

“And I feel like she got every sickness she could find around there so constantly having to take off, and I could have those days there to make sure that I could get her to the doctor.”

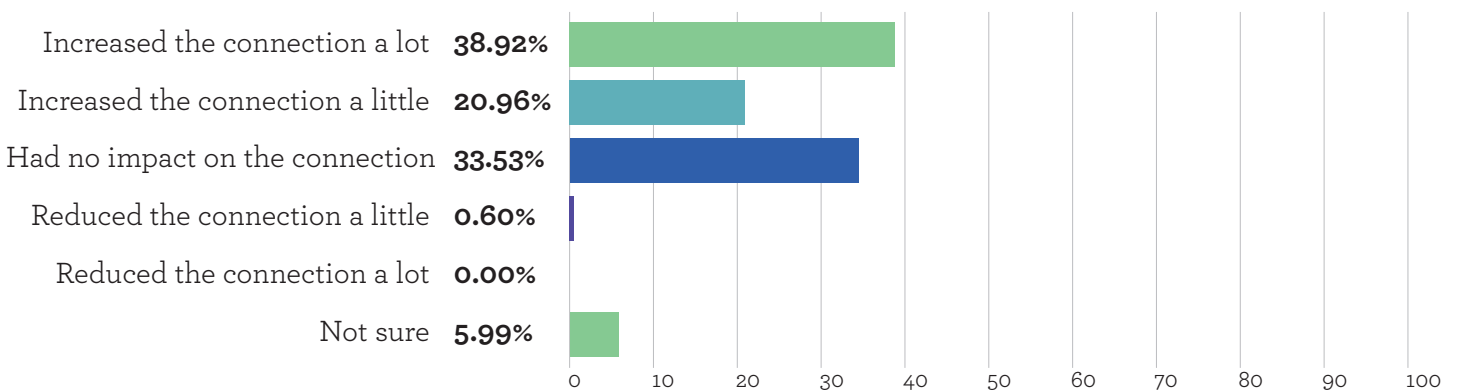
Co-parenting Relationship

Among parents who reported that they were co-parenting with a spouse or partner, we asked how the use of NPL affected their relationship – how it impacted their feelings of connectedness and relationship conflict, and also how it affected their ability to share parenting responsibilities.

Relationship Connection

Over 60% of parents surveyed reported that the use of the NPL benefit improved the connection in their relationship. About a third of the sample reported that the benefit had no impact on their feelings of connectedness with their co-parent, only one participant reported that the use of the benefit lessened their co-parenting connection a little.

We are interested in how your use of paid parental leave time affected the quality of your relationship with your co-parent. Did your use of paid leave impact your feelings of connection with your co-parent?



Benefitted Parents' Connection

In interviews where both parents had an NPL benefit, they reported that it allowed them to strengthen their relationship by spending more time together and sharing parenting responsibilities. Where only one parent had the benefit, they reported it reduced relationship stress because they could feel confident one of them would be able to provide that early infant care. Parents reported the time enabled them to retain some sense of normalcy in their relationship while also learning how their relationship would evolve as a growing family.

“I think it just enabled us to extend that bonding period a little bit more where we could really focus on getting to know each other as parents, and getting to know how to live with an infant and adjust a little bit kind of eased that initial experience.”

“Of course, it’s going to increase your relationship with your partner, and increase the bonding with your child, and increase the safety of that child in your home, because you have one less thing to worry about.”

“It’s a powerful relationship. And as a father, I was able to spend more time with my kids and spend more time with my wife.”



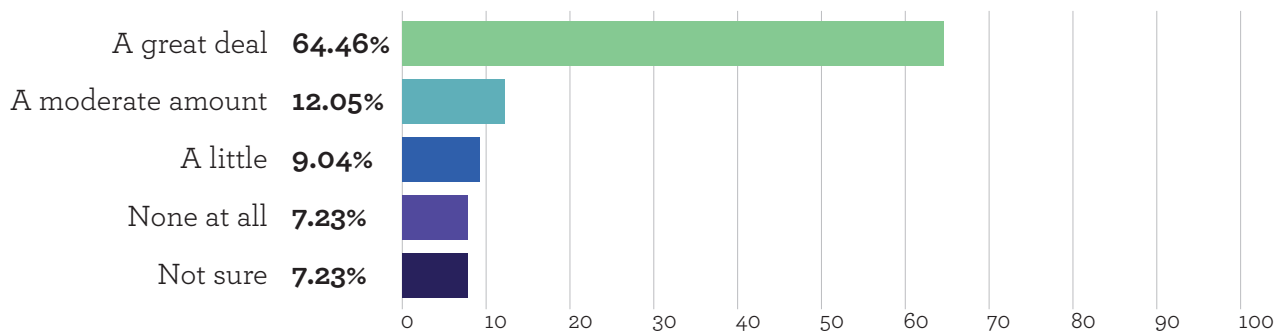
“It definitely allowed us to be closer moving through this process together. I think I went into this worried that again, not knowing about this benefit, that I would only be off work for maybe a day or two, or maybe a week at best, and I’d have to go right back to work...Especially with my first kid being in the NICU having that dedicated time allowed us to experience this together. It was a pretty trying week. We didn’t get much sleep. We were worried for our daughter, and I wanted to be there for her. And having this, having the flexibility and the confidence that could take this dedicated time allowed us to have a stronger partnership, and it really got us off on the right foot, as new parents.”

“Having this period of time meant her and I could tackle challenges together, learning how to do diapers and how to feed, and how to deal with sleeping arrangements and whatnot. So, it really helped strengthen our relationship, and we continue to have a really strong relationship.”

Sharing Parenting Responsibilities

Among those co-parenting, a strong majority of parents reported in both surveys and interviews that access to NPL time helped them to share parenting responsibilities including building skills, determining parenting roles and establishing routines. Parents reported that the flexibility of the time allowed them to trade off parenting responsibilities according to their needs — exhaustion, illness and other work demands.

To what degree did the availability of the new parent leave benefit enable you to share in parenting responsibilities?



“It was just helpful because my husband was also able to take time off, but he went back to work obviously way sooner than I went back to work. I think, even having that additional four weeks to kind of just get into a routine, and to figure out who’s going to take on what responsibility once we do both go back to work. What is that going to look like? Being able to have that extra time to figure that out and have some of those conversations was helpful.”

“The ability for us both to be there and try to maintain a sort of normalcy of how we were before, it kind of takes the edge off. We always kept a clean house, and you have your other responsibilities that you had that are still there, and so to be able to divide and conquer and split the responsibilities and give her that peace of minds for making sure XYZ is getting done and keeping the HOA off of your back.”

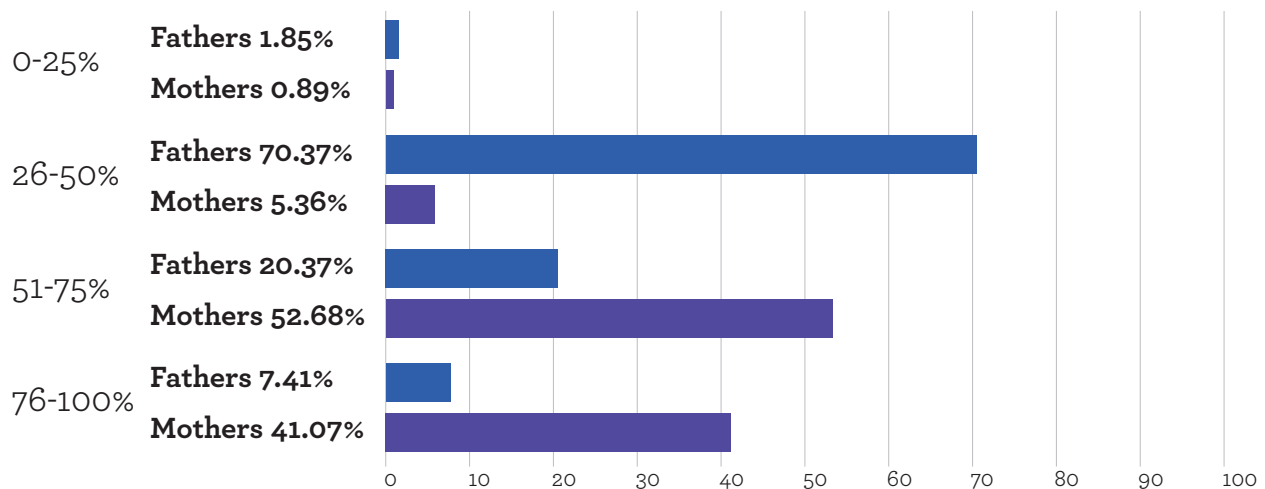
“ I think it allowed us to experience everything together, make mistakes together, but learn together, which really helped. This time gave me a lot of time to bond with my daughter and my son right from the get-go. You know, if they’re not sleeping. My wife doesn’t have to be the one to jump up and hold the baby, feed them, change their diaper. I can do that, and you know, the next day I can sleep a little bit, take a nap, and she can pick it up from there, and we can bounce back and forth.”

“ I think about my parents and their kind of split of parental responsibilities. And most of it, I’m the youngest of (a large family), and most of it fell on my mom. And I think that’s how lots of families used to do it. And now it feels like those kind of responsibilities are split, of course not perfectly evenly, but I think more dads are kind of taking that responsibility as theirs as well. And he did immediately. I think because he knew he was off from work he understood that’s what his work was now – helping with the kiddo. It was a nice way to start our lives as parents that we were both in it, you know.”

Sharing Parenting Responsibilities

Though a strong majority of parents reported on the survey and in interviews that the NPL supported their ability to share parenting responsibilities, as the chart below depicts, mothers or birth parents were still responsible for the majority of parenting responsibilities. Another survey question asked those who were co-parenting whether their partner also had any new parent leave hours. With that question fathers generally had less access to paid parental leave — only 40% of mothers reported that their co-parent also had some paid parental leave and 48% of fathers reported that their co-parent had some paid leave. Though only a small percentage of parents in Indiana have any paid parental leave time, reducing the disparity in access to paid parental leave for fathers could be a mechanism for increasing equity in parenting responsibilities between mothers and fathers.

About how much of your new child’s caregiving are you responsible for?



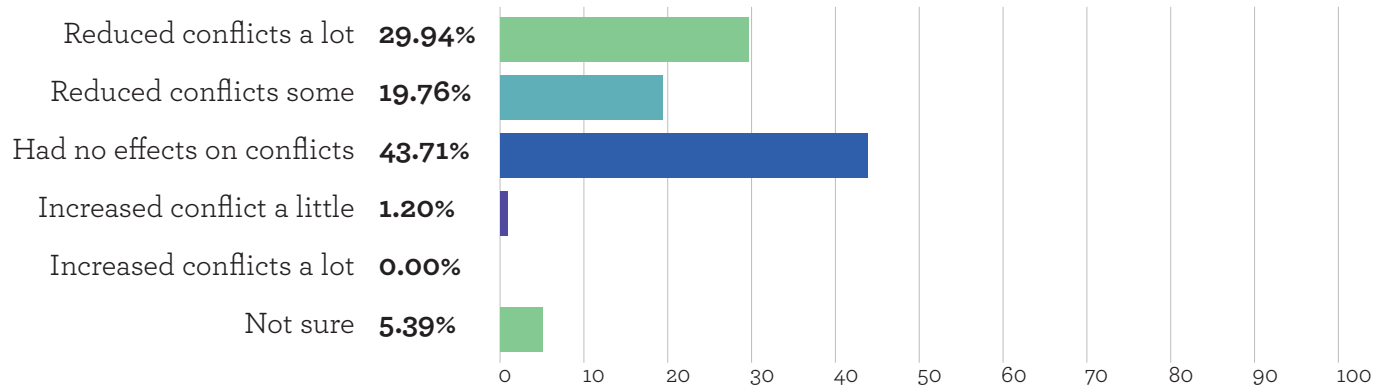
“ So the first go around because he wasn’t working and was able to help me. It was very much, I wouldn’t say it was a total 50-50 split in kind of responsibilities with our first kiddo because I was breastfeeding, and obviously he couldn’t do that. But he did help. I mean, we were way more able to help each other through those 12 weeks. I think, this time around, because he was still working, more of it, fell on me just because I was on leave.”



Relationship Conflict

For a strong majority of survey respondents, the NPL benefit either reduced experiences of conflict in their relationship with their co-parent (50%) or had no effect on conflict in their relationship (44%).

Did your use of paid parental leave affect your experiences of conflict with your co-parent?



Reduced Relationship Stress And Conflict

Relationship dynamics like economic stress, parenting responsibilities and household management are frequently cited as sources of stress and conflict in intimate partner relationships. Needs in each of these areas of family life become greater when a new child is welcomed into the family. While acknowledging the amplification of these stressors with the birth or adoption of their new child, parents reported that the availability of the NPL reduced their feelings of economic stress and made it easier to manage parenting and household responsibilities.

“If neither of us had that new parent leave to be able to supplement it would have been really, really stressful for us, and we probably would have had a breakdown in our relationship as well, just trying to figure out who’s going to more or less bend over backwards to help support the family physically in the home.”

“Just knowing that it’s not going to be a huge financial drain on your family probably improves all relationships, especially any tension between Mom and Dad, especially with new kids.”

“When you have less stress in other areas, it’s easier to be more present and less snappy at each other.”

“You know, it took that level of stress out cause anytime that you have financial stress, you’re gonna be worried about that, you know? You want to be able to make sure you’re paying your bills, have money for food, diapers, and you know formula, if you have to go that route. So the last thing you want to do is argue with your partner about money.”

Conclusions

In both interviews and in the open comment fields on the survey, supervisors and parents were eager to share information about their experiences with the new parent leave policy. They offered praise and affirmation, described how the benefit supported the parents who used it, and how it affected their teams. From their experiences with implementation, they also offered recommendations for strategies to improve the administration of the benefit.

Challenges and Recommendations

Though the experiences of NPL that parents and supervisors reported were overwhelmingly positive, they also shared notes about challenges that they experienced and advice for how the state could improve the terms and administration of the benefit.

More Time

When we asked respondents if there was anything else that they wanted the state to know about their experience with the NPL benefit, both in the survey comments and in interviews, the most common responses were, *thank you so much for this benefit*, and *more time would be better*.

While many parents and supervisors recognized that the availability of paid parental leave is rare in the US, many referenced supports that parents receive in other countries in arguing that 150 hours of paid leave isn't sufficient for maternal recovery, fostering strong family bonds, and being able to place an infant in daycare. Their recommendations align with the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations that all parents have access to a minimum of twelve weeks of paid family leave time.²¹

Parents particularly observed that more recovery was needed for mothers who delivered via a cesarean birth, and also when their infants were born prematurely or with other health concerns. Some acknowledged that they were able to take more time off with FMLA, but expressed concern that lower-income parents might not be able to afford to take unpaid or partially paid time.

“It’s nice to know that I have this benefit. I think, being the birthing parent, like 4 weeks, is it enough time? You can’t even go back to work after four weeks...I wouldn’t be allowed to come back to work after four weeks, even if I wanted to like the time you have to take off of work is six weeks. So, I don’t want to knock it, because it’s great to have the benefit. I think it’s more beneficial for dads because a month at home is great when you’re the dad, but when you’re the birthing parent you need at least six weeks.”

“I also had a C-section, so I had a longer physical recovery as well. And it would be nice if that was included in some way, how short-term disability includes an additional two weeks for C-section.”

“I just think it’s an amazing benefit. I wish there was more time because your babies are only small for a very, very short window.”

“I say, eight weeks, but at least a minimum of six weeks, because daycares don’t accept babies unless they are six weeks old. Even home daycares most of them are like, no, they need to be at least six weeks old. So, you’re kind of having to find a person that you trust that you hopefully know.”



“ My baby came at 32 weeks, so she’s still in the NICU, and probably will be for the next couple of months. I have to think about her and wonder what would you do if you only got four weeks, you can only take four weeks, but then you had to go back to work while your baby is still in the NICU. That’s probably the best place for them. However. I would want to be there every day, all day. And you know, and you couldn’t be.”

“ So at least two weeks more would be nice. It would be nice if we were on par with other countries and give us four months, but I know that’s dreaming at this point. But longer would be better, and I don’t think that’s being greedy or anything. I think that’s it’s really reasonable.”

“ I’m sure you’re getting the recommendation from everybody. But oh, my gosh! It needs to be longer.”

More Instruction/Guidance on Use

For many parents, a top category of praise was the relative ease of using the benefit. It appeared that some parents had a different experience in using the benefit based on when they used it, and how experienced their supervisor and personnel department representatives were with the benefit. Those who praised the ease of use indicated that they got clear information about the process, up front, and also had helpful points of contact with the personnel department. Those who indicated struggles with the benefit asked for more clarity, information in writing, and consistent, accurate guidance from the personnel department.

“ I think that they could update their guides online. Like, they have a website on HR for like new parent leave FML, and how it kind of works. And it’s really a big jigsaw puzzle depending on how much time you have in your days off bank of sick time, personal time, that kind of stuff. And so everyone goes through it differently. And someone I work with told me when I got pregnant like, hey, you should have a meeting with Hr. And kind of go over what your leave could look like, and that was really helpful.”

“ Maybe they could do a webinar to kind of walk through the paperwork because it can be confusing. I was fortunate to know the HR Woman who is now in that department. She had previously been our HR representative, so I had that relationship so she could walk me step by step. But if someone was trying to figure it out themselves, it can be kind of confusing all the paperwork that needs to be done, and then how time has to be entered when they are on leave.”

“ FML was incredibly complicated and changed with every child I had, which was 2 years apart. It was really frustrating. And every time I called the helpline they gave me different answers. So maybe a more streamlined guide or a ‘how to’ would be great because it’s not user friendly, and it’s not intuitive.”

“ The process of actually working with an HR Department to get the benefits in place is kind of confusing... It would be nice to see some HR a little bit better trained to help out a new mom or a new parent, because I’ve dealt with some who knew it forward and backward, and then I dealt with somebody who had absolutely no idea what they were doing, and I did find that frustrating.”

“ We got it all figured out. But when you’re dealing with somebody’s money and making sure that they’re getting paid and paperwork while they’re pregnant. It’s as a lot.”

“ I remember the first time around I worked with some individuals from the ISPD who were really lovely, like really, really kind, nice people, but they gave me bad advice. When to take my leave, and when I could take my leave. So I remember being very stressed, and I had just welcomed my first child, and so I was already kind of overwhelmed. But then, to get information that was incorrect about when I could take my leave and all of that stuff...hopefully it’s all been worked out.”

Complicated Processes

Several parents reported that documentation processes after they welcomed their new child were complicated and procedurally difficult — particularly when they were providing care to a newborn. They wondered if there could be greater flexibility in the provision of new child documentation and timesheets — either prior to leave, or on a more flexible leave schedule to reduce the burden that they felt to check in with work in moments that were overwhelming.

“ Having to send documentation the day, or the second day of my baby’s life was difficult to manage in the hospital while you’re rooming in and breastfeeding and getting stitched up.”

“ The confusion of you needing the actual birth certificate post birth before it’s actually approved. Luckily, I fell into the beginning of a pay period when my daughter was born, so that I had the time to get that in to cover those periods.”

“ I didn’t necessarily find that out until I tried applying for it, and I tried to send in, you know what they give you at the hospital, and they were like that’s not good enough. So that part was a little stressful. So I think maybe some clearer notes or information surrounding what it takes to get it approved would be helpful.”

“ The other thing is with billing it. We have to log everything into our payroll system, and that was one of the little hiccups, is that you still have to log on, and you still have to do everything. So while you’re trying to manage this newborn baby, now, you’ve gotta enter in your time. So having some system that says, Okay, these 4 weeks, I’m taking this off. I don’t have to come in here and worry about entering in my time. So that I get paid. You know, just taking that extra layer of stress out of the new mom’s life would be nice.”

Marketing and Promoting the Policy

Parents encouraged broad marketing and promoting of the NPL policy to ensure that all state employees knew about the benefit. Many reported that they had not known about the benefit when they learned that they were expecting, and many reported that they got information about leave from their colleagues. They encouraged more consistent information sharing to ensure that all employees were able to fully use the benefit.

“ I think one thing is just getting the word out there about it. I don’t know how many people, when they might be planning on starting a family, or they know they’re pregnant...Just kind of letting them know that is available to you upfront and letting them know, like who’s eligible and how you’re eligible. And maybe just the process of that being a little more clear.”

“ My coworker just had a baby in November so I was telling her, this is how you do your FML stuff. This is how you do your new parent leave, and she’s like, oh, I didn’t even know there was additional time that I could take. So, I think it’s still happening. So that would be just very helpful just to get the word out.”

Fostering

Parents who had foster children, and those whose adoptions began with a foster placement expressed the desire that some of their foster care time be included in the NPL benefit. Those whose foster care placement was temporary talked about the logistics to be managed upon a placement. Parents whose foster placement moved into adoption reported that they received NPL upon the finalization of their adoption, but that they could have benefited from the bonding and prep time during their foster period.

“ I wish there was a little bit better options for foster care kids, you know to have some extra time for them. I realize that you may only have your foster kid for two weeks, two months, or two years, but I do feel that coming from the foster parent perspective is very challenging, because when you bring a child into your care as a foster parent you’re thrown into something, and there’s wait lists for daycares, and you have to go through all this paperwork to get them into somewhere, and that takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of time from work, and you either have to burn your own time, if you have it, or rely on family members to help you, because there’s a lot of rules about foster care and parents, and who can watch your kids. So, I wish there was a better policy for foster parents.”

Appreciations

Praise for the Policy and Benefits Observed

General Praise

The final question that we posed in interviews and with the survey was an open invitation for participants to tell us anything else that they would like us to know about their experience with the NPL benefit. Overwhelmingly, supervisors and parents used that space to praise the policy with feedback ranging from the benefits of working for the state of Indiana, the ease of implementation, and the immense value for parents. They said:

“ Overall, I loved it. I think it’s a huge perk. I think it’s an amazing benefit...It’s equitable. It’s one thing that the State offers with no strings attached. It’s great. Insurance benefits are one thing, but they change every year. New parent leave is new, parent leave, and it’s fabulous. It’s a great incentive. I’d love to see it increased. But I am very thankful for what it is.”

“ I have two kids, new parent leave existed for both kids. I don’t know what people did before the new parent leave existed.”

“It benefits us more than they know...Giving these children these good childhoods is what sets them up for their future. You know it’s what builds them as a person, so them helping us by allowing us to do that gives them better adults in the future. It all kind of trickles down. And so, thank you for that.”

“I can’t sing its praises enough. Definitely, definitely. Probably one of the top two benefits that the State offers.”

“I’ve been with the State for 16 years, and I’ve taken my own leaves. The most recent was 10 years ago. So, it was before the new policy. I have experience of how it used to be, and then how it is now. So, I think it’s greatly improved. It was really nice to be able to support my most recent employee in taking her leave.”

“I think it’s great. That’s just another benefit for the employee. I think there’s been a lot of strides in the last few years to make working here more flexible. You know, with that and remote work, and some of the flexible policies. It’s just one of the benefits for working for the State.”

“I think, that the parent leave is an amazing addition that they’ve added with the extended time that you know they can have with the child. I’ve always felt like six or eight weeks wasn’t enough, and so for them to be able to have that extended time. I think that that’s an amazing addition that they added, and I don’t think that that should be something that ever goes away.”

“Before new parent leave was implemented. When I was with (x agency), I would see moms coming back at two to three weeks post birth because they just didn’t have the time to cover. And they couldn’t financially take that hit. So, this has definitely been one of the better policies that I have seen implemented in my time with the State.”

“When you think about all that goes into having a baby and taking care of yourself, and also taking care of baby, and possibly also taking care of a family. I really do just think that time is just so invaluable and something that you can’t get back.”

“It was just wonderful. My wife and I can’t appreciate enough. You know how useful it was for us, not the least of which was the not feeling guilty about focusing on our lives at home.”



Flexibility of Use

Parents expressed appreciation about the flexibility available to them with their NPL time, and the ability to extend leave hours over the first six months of welcoming a new child. Parents appreciated the fact that the benefit was available to parents who adopted their child as well as for those who welcomed a child through birth. Many new parents reported using all of their time, up front, to learn new parenting skills, but other parents divided their time and traded off primary parenting responsibilities to extend the period of time before they needed to put their child into a daycare program. Other parents discussed how helpful it felt to be able to use NPL to cover healthcare appointments, absences related to childhood illness and any other emerging family needs.

“Probably the biggest benefit to this new parent leave is that you can use it so many different ways...Every baby is different, and every mom is different, and every family is different. You’re gonna be able to find a way that it works for you.”

“It actually worked out fantastic. I was able to take the week we adopted her. I was able to take that whole week off so we could just celebrate her adoption. And then throughout the rest of the six months I used it. If she had a doctor’s appointment or stuff like that. So, it worked out really nice that one of us could stay home and not have to worry about having to take sick time or stuff like that.”

“You’ve got six months to break it up how you need it. I think I took two weeks right off the bat, and then I split up the other two weeks, you know later on, which is beneficial, because we ended up having two hospital trips...that really helped out without having to be overly concerned about how much PTO I have. And or having to worry about if I’m gonna have a job or not, you know, or have money coming in. So, it was very beneficial.”

“I think is fantastic. I’m using my other 2 weeks when my wife’s time is up, so we can maximize the length of one parent, not working.”

“There was a time when I took two or three days at a time – just based on doctors’ appointments, or if I needed time, just mental time to spend with my son, I would use that time. It gave me a lot of flexibility. And I think that was another really nice feature of how the State’s implemented this policy that you can use it up through the first six months of the kiddos life. So I didn’t feel like I had to use it right at the beginning or right at the end for my second kid. I staggered it out a little bit, and I really love that flexibility.”

“Had I returned to work full time right away, five days a week, I think that would have been a little bit of a stretch and a struggle. So, having the availability to take some extra days as I eased back into full time definitely helped with bonding. Support, care for the infant. Everything.”

Ease of Use

Many parents reported that navigating the NPL benefit was very easy for them. They said that the application and documentation processes were fairly straightforward. They shared deep appreciation for the Indiana State Personnel Department members who assisted them along the way.

“ My experience with it has been wonderful. It’s super easy...once you know about it, to apply for it, and get it and all that stuff. I think it’s user friendly on how to actually go about getting the information.”

“ It was really easy. I talked to our HR Department for a little bit beforehand, just to make sure I knew what I was doing, and I it was really easy to use it.”

“ The people who helped me within the personnel department, who I would talk to and help me through the leave, they were absolutely wonderful.”

“ Just how easy it was to sign up for it. Because I thought the process was gonna be super paperwork intensive, and it was gonna take days and days for it to get approved. But I think, like I submitted the email with the confirmation of birth, and it was approved within hours. So, I was able to handle everything from my phone while I was in the hospital, still waiting to be dismissed with the baby and her.”

“ Everyone was very helpful with employee relations. I could call them pretty much at any time, and figure out what information I needed to send when, and to who, whether that’s, you know, forms or some kind of birth certificate, or whatever. They were always very helpful and quick with responses.”

“ So, I spoke to one person which I don’t know if that’s always the case. But I had her number, so I just kept calling her so that I wouldn’t get anyone else with the State Personnel Department. She was absolutely wonderful; I mean start to finish.”

One parent the team interviewed also identified as a supervisor who had helped to administer the benefit, she described her process for guiding expect parents through their benefits:

“ We have expecting parent packets and stuff like that for both moms and dad. But I like to schedule meetings with the people once they tell me that they’re going out on maternity leave. I like to print a calendar with what their accrued time is, because I don’t want people to have that burden of coming back like right away, because they can’t financially afford to not do that. I want them to be able to stay off for as long as possible to have that bonding time for sure.”



Work/Family Balance

Parents reported how much it meant to them to have the State of Indiana support them in having a healthy work-life balance. They appreciated that their workplace understood them as whole people and protected space for them to also have thriving families. Fathers particularly noted how helpful it was to have their use of leave supported by their supervisors and teams. Some reported that their supervisors or workplace set the tone by encouraging team members to use their leave – this helped to ensure that the benefit wasn't just technically available, but also normatively available for their use.

“ I appreciate that. They, you know, take into account. you know our life outside of work, you know, and that they give this to us so that we can use it.”

“ I just think, you know, it's important for management to encourage taking this, and for team members to encourage it too, because they're gonna be sharing your workload while you're away. So it's important for them to realize that they may be using the same leave so I think that's what helps my team to encourage one another to use it.”

“ Having the benefit I feel supported by the State, and I appreciate that they acknowledge that we need some time, especially at the beginning. We need some time to bond with our kids, to have good relationships with our partners, to make sure that we you know, set the stage for being good parents right from the get go.”

“ To have it really laid out there and established, protected by the policy...It helps set the tone. To have the employer say I got you, you know. It's just great, and I think it takes the edge off a little bit, because I think some people still have old school styles, and maybe not a huge amount, or in places of leadership where I work, but I think, having it outlined like that kind of keeps those skepticisms at bay, which is nice. You're not feeling like you have to defend yourself like you want to go and take the leave even though that's women's work, that kind of thing. That wasn't really prevalent, and it was just so, so nice.”

Conclusion

The positive impacts of paid parental leave for the workplace and families observed through this evaluation parallels those found from other states that have adopted PFL policies. With these findings, we encourage key decision makers in Indiana to follow the State of Indiana's example by adopting comprehensive, universal PFL benefits for all workers. The growing evidence base shows that workplace policies that support families are good for business, good for health and good for positive child development. These positive outcomes reduce public health and safety costs, and foster our abilities to learn and earn across the lifespan. The broader adoption of such policies could help to reinforce Indiana as both “A State That Works”, and as a state that works for families, across generations.

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