



Paid Family Leave: Supporting Work and Family Stability Among Lower Income Mothers

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Today's Talk

- Study context
- Research questions and methods
- Background on state PFL programs
- Who we talked with
- What they said
- Implications
- Next research steps



Study Context

- Relatively low work attachment at time of childbirth among lower SES mothers (Laughlin 2011)
 - **61% first-time moms with < high school left work vs. 16% among those with college or more**
- Childbirth a time of economic risk (Stanczyk 2018)
- Lower wage jobs least likely to have employer-provided PFL (6% for bottom quartile vs. 24% at top [BLS 2017])
- Research indicates greater work attachment, returns to employers with state PFL use (e.g. Baum and Ruhm 2016).



Research Questions

1. What affects lower income PFL-using mothers' work stability around childbirth? Attachment to employer?
2. What role does PFL appear to play in mothers' work stability? What aspects of PFL matter most?
3. How do PFL, childcare, and other factors interact in supporting mothers' work stability?



Methods

- Focus groups, supplemental interviews + short questionnaire
 - **Lower income mothers who used or were using PFL**
 - **Conducted by Mission Analytics Group/CAI**
- 11 groups, 21 interviews
 - **75 participants**
 - **Feb-May 2018**
 - **English and Spanish**
- Conducted in California (65), NJ (8), and RI (2)
- Recruitment (challenging!)
 - **Service organizations**
 - **Direct recruitment through Facebook, Craigslist, flyers, etc.**
- ASPE coded and analyzed data, input from Mission



State PFL Programs (Spring 2018)

State Program	Minimum prior wages for eligibility	Benefit length	Wage replacement rate up to cap	Job protection	Year
CA PFL	\$300	6 weeks	60 to 70%	No (unless covered by FMLA, other state law)	2004
NJ FLI	\$3380	6 weeks	66%	No (unless covered by FMLA, other state law)	2009
RI TCI	\$4040	4 weeks	60%	Yes	2014

All PFL is in addition to mothers' access to state temporary disability insurance (TDI). No firm size or job tenure requirements (unlike FMLA). Employee must pay into state TDI fund through payroll taxes.



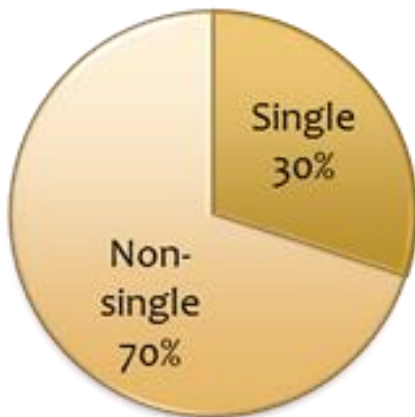
Who We Talked With

- Study criteria: All used/using PFL, household income below area median, child under 2 years old
- 69% household income under \$50,000—38% under \$25,000
- Jobs: e.g. retail, administrative, health care, child care, food service, social services, customer service, agricultural work
- 70% returned to work, 60% to same employer (87% of returners)
- 30% left—13% fired, 17% quit

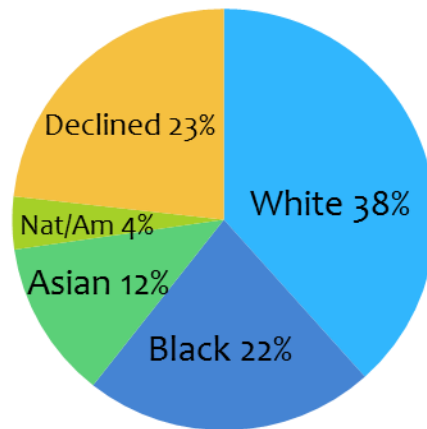


Who We Talked With, cont'd.

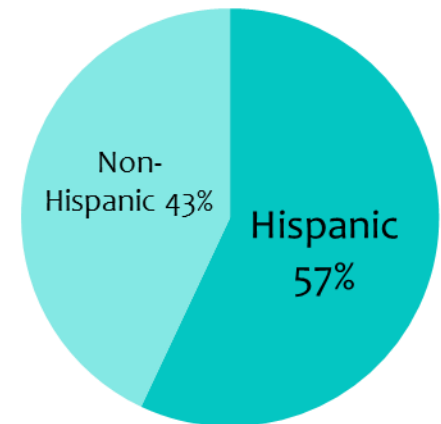
Single vs. Non-single Mothers



Racial Demographics



Hispanic/Non-Hispanic





The Essential Take-Aways

- Key factors contributing to mothers' work stability:
 - **Childcare costs, availability, quality**
 - **Employer support, job quality, job protection**
 - **Desire/need to work vs. desire/need to be with baby**
 - **Family support—time or money**
- PFL facilitated work for mothers by providing time for:
 - **Childcare arrangements**
 - **Bonding—made returns more acceptable**
 - **Time for baby to grow, transition to care**
 - **Physical and mental recovery**
 - **Breastfeeding and transition to bottle/pumping**
- Some barriers beyond scope of PFL to address
 - **Childcare**
 - **Job quality (except job protection)**



In Their Words....

“After the [paid leave] you say, ‘Well this helped me a lot, this program. I’m more rested, calmer, better physically and I can go back to work.’” *Lucy, Providence, RI*



Why They Returned to Work

- Need for money and benefits
- Desire to work and be in the world
- Desire for financial independence from spouse/partner
- Childcare becoming available
- But sense of conflict common



In Their Words....

“The Money. Money. Definitely the money. We can't do it without me working too.” *Kristine, Sacramento, CA*

“[It’s] uplifting some days to get up in the morning and take a shower...have a cup of coffee and go to the office. That is pretty cool.” *Tiff, Los Angeles, CA*

“I have 4Cs which helps out with childcare. So that has motivated me to work.” *Helen, Santa Rosa, CA*

“Well it was a little difficult because you don’t want to leave your baby, but then your will imposes because you have to work or otherwise how do you survive?” *Lucia, Lancaster, CA*



Why They Returned to Employer

- Employer supportiveness
 - **Baby-friendly scheduling**
 - **Breastfeeding/pumping support**
 - **Flexibility and respect for family responsibilities**
 - **Benefits such as health insurance, sick leave**
- Job protection
- Enjoyed the job, co-workers
- Obligation, loyalty
- Easier to stay than go



In Their Words....

“The culture is really good about moms, and they won’t shame you for trying to do the best for your family and for your baby. Even if I had asked for an extra day or two to go back, if I had emotional [struggles]. You know, leaving the baby could be stressful.” *Jess, Paterson, NJ*

“I like where I work, I really like where I work. I like the people, I like what I do.” *Amanda, Sacramento, CA*

“Because at that moment you feel stuck with no other option than to return to what you already have and not have to struggle more than what you’re already struggling with.” *Marie, Fresno, CA*



Why They Left Work

- Returning to work was too expensive and too difficult
 - **Cost of child care consumed paycheck**
 - **No care fit work schedule or baby's needs**
 - **Anxious about quality of care**
 - **Lack of family support**
- Wanted to be full-time mom
- Babies' health needs
- Unsupportive employers
 - **Would not allow change in schedule**
 - **Didn't support breastfeeding**
 - **Didn't allow full leave**
- No job protection—let go



In Their Words....

“I decided to stay home because it was easier and it was less expensive.” *Mia, San Diego, CA*

“So, I would basically just be paying daycare so I could go to work, but I'm working so I can pay for daycare so I can go to work. That was just nuts.”
Tiffany, Sacramento, CA

“I’m staying at home because it’s just my thing. I want to see my baby all day.”
Aubrey, Sacramento, CA

“I spoke with them [about taking leave] and they said that it wasn’t good for them if I stayed at home for more than three weeks...They said that they couldn’t wait for me, so I quit one week before my C-section.” *Marcela, San Jose, CA*



What They Said About the Role of PFL in Returning to Work

- Virtually all the mothers said PFL helped them, largely by providing subsidized time to:
 - **Do what was necessary to return to work**
 - **Acclimate to life with their new baby, making returning more acceptable**
- Several said they would have quit without PFL—being with their baby was “mandatory”
- Others said absent PFL they would have returned to work almost immediately—income was mandatory
- Problems with the program—money too modest, time too short, system often too hard to navigate—but essentially all saw value



In Their Words

“That [PFL] money I had helped me pay my rent on time and not have the worry about becoming homeless, in addition to taking care of my little baby.” *Coco, San Francisco, CA*

“If I didn’t have access to paid family leave, I probably wouldn’t be working again because I definitely know when I had my baby, I’d be like, “Okay, I need to take time off.” So, I wouldn’t have returned...” *Anna, Los Angeles, CA*

“It benefits us. If this program didn’t exist, disability and paid family leave, it would be straight out of the hospital and a few days and then back to work.” *Flor, Gilroy, CA*



What Was Most Helpful about PFL for Returning to Work

- Time to:
 - **Find affordable, acceptable child care**
 - **Bond with baby, address health/developmental issues, establish routines**
 - **Establish breastfeeding and transition to pumping and bottle**
 - **Recover physically and mentally**
 - **Time for the baby to get big enough to be in care, transition**
 - **Prepare for work mentally and logistically**
- **Fathers' access to PFL**



In Their Words....

“It gave me the time...to put in the paperwork [for a subsidy]. And then whatever they needed, I was able to come back and turn in more paperwork, as far as childcare goes. It gave me that extra time to do those things, to get stuff done.” *Michelle, Fresno, CA*

“[PFL] allowed you to get on a pump schedule and try to figure out how things are going to work out once you returned.” *Samantha, Sacramento, CA*



In Their Words....

“This way the baby grows a little more and he gets stronger so he’s ready for when I leave him with someone to care for him [rather] than when he is so young.” *Rebecca, Fresno, CA*

“I think it’s also good we have time to heal after giving birth, so that time helps. Aside from the bonding time, of course. That’s enjoyable, but nobody wants to give birth and go right back to work.... Giving birth is not that easy.” *Lilly, Fresno, CA*



Take-aways for Mothers

- PFL provided state-administered subsidy for the leave time
- Most suggested PFL helped them return to work and still take time to be a new mother
- Time allowed for work preparation (child care arrangements, transition to pumping, recovery), bonding, breastfeeding
- Mothers recommended PFL improvements
- But other barriers to work stability remain outside its scope
 - **childcare costs, availability, quality**
 - **characteristics of low-wage jobs and workplaces**



Considerations for Human Services Agencies and Others

- Consider proactive work with parents-to-be, especially those with fewest resources
- Increase awareness of PFL availability and requirements in PFL states
- Assist parents with action plan to prepare for specific challenges of new parenthood and work
- Identify (or develop) additional resources
- Consider own agency and employment practices, better ways to support new parents



Next Research Steps

- Next steps for this project:
 - **Brief on intersections with childcare**
 - **Potential future topics—lessons from “high-road” low-wage employers that support PFL families**
- Other potential research:
 - **Implementation of PFL among small businesses and lower wage employers—barriers and opportunities**
 - **How staffing agencies implement PFL**



Questions and Further Information

QUESTIONS or COMMENTS?

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Two briefs on project so far:

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/family-leave-lower-income-working-families>

THANK YOU!