

# **THE IMPACT OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE IN DELAWARE**

**Department of Human Resources**

**March 2021**

This report was prepared for the Delaware General Assembly and Governor John C. Carney, as required in House Bill 3 with House Amendment 4, passed during the 149<sup>th</sup> General Assembly session.

Per HB 3, the Department of Human Resources shall submit a report to the Delaware General Assembly and the Governor on the parental leave program annually. The report shall include projected program participation, actual program participation, demographic information of participants, including gender, race, and ethnicity, duration of leave taken by participants, outreach efforts, and impacts of the program on recruitment and retention. Reorganized school districts, charter schools and vocational school districts shall submit their program participation, demographic information of participants, including gender, race and ethnicity, duration of leave taken by participants, outreach efforts, and impacts of the program on recruitment and retention to the Department of Human Resources annually to be included in the report to the General Assembly and the Governor. In order to provide the required data for the report, the DHR extracted the statistics for all agencies and schools from the State's human resource information system and was able to verify the information for Executive Branch agencies only.

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## **INTRODUCTION: ESTABLISHING THE POLICY**

April 1, 2020 marked one-year of paid parental leave for State workers. With the passage of this legislation, Delaware joined at least a dozen other states that provide at least some paid parental leave to state workers (National Partnership for Women & Families, 2020). From April 1, 2019 until June 30, 2020, 1,110 State employees, including those from the Executive Branch, Non-Executive Branch, School districts, and Charter schools participated in this leave benefit per the policy. This report reflects on the key elements of the leave's first year including how the policy was developed and distributed to agencies, data on projected and actual participation, data on the duration of leave, how the policy was communicated both internally and externally, as well as how the policy was integrated into recruitment and retention efforts.

Research shows that newborns whose mothers take leave for at least 12 weeks are more likely to be breastfed, receive medical check-ups, and get critical immunizations (Rossin-Slater, 2019). Additionally, paid parental leave is associated with lower rates of mortality for infants and young children (Rossin-Slater, 2019). Women with access to paid parental leave have an increased likelihood of returning to the labor market after giving birth, compared to women without paid leave and when fathers take paid parental leave, it is easier for mothers to return to the workforce and increase their earnings (Bartel 2015). Furthermore, involved fathers promote children's educational attainment and emotional stability, including fewer behavioral issues (Smith, 2015).

House Bill 3 with House Amendment 4 determined that Delaware's paid parental leave would provide up to 12 calendar weeks of parental leave to eligible employees upon the birth of a child of the employee, or upon the adoption by the employee of a child six (6) years of age or younger. The leave would run concurrently with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the State's Short-Term Disability (STD) benefit, and the entitlement to parental leave would expire at the end of the 12-month period beginning on the date of such birth or adoption. Any employee that left their employment with the State prior to the end of the 12-month period would not be eligible for payment of any unused parental leave. Lastly, at the conclusion of parental leave, the State would restore the eligible employee to the same or equivalent position, barring any unforeseen circumstances unrelated to the employee's taking leave.

### **DHR Workgroup**

In order to implement the components of the paid parental leave legislation, the Department of Human Resources created a workgroup which developed a statewide policy for Executive Branch state agencies governing the application and granting of leave including required notice and documentation. The newly developed policy was distributed to all affected state agencies. DHR worked with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Payroll Human Resource Statewide Technology (PHRST) to create new parameters so that agency and school staff could record and report on the appropriate data. Lastly, formal training on the new policy and the new codes to be used in PHRST were provided to agencies and schools.

## SECTION 1: ACTUAL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The Department of Human Resources generated one report for fiscal years 2019 (FY19) and 2020 (FY20) from Payroll Human Resource Statewide Technology (PHRST) in order to report on the utilization of paid parental leave from April 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.

In Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020, a grand total of 718 women and 392 men utilized paid parental leave. The following tables provide data on paid parental leave use with breakouts for gender and race/ethnicity for state agencies (including both Executive and Non-Executive agencies), as well as school districts and charter schools.

<b>Count of Agency Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave 04/01/2019 through 06/30/2020</b>							
<b>Male Count Taking PPL</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Multi</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>161</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Female Count Taking PPL</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Multi</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>107</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>172</b>

\*Any count smaller than 10 has been suppressed in order to protect personal health information as individuals may be identifiable.

<b>Count of School District Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave 04/01/2019 through 06/30/2020</b>							
<b>Male Count Taking PPL</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Multi</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>136</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Female Count Taking PPL</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Multi</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>462</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>546</b>

\*Any count smaller than 10 has been suppressed in order to protect personal health information as individuals may be identifiable.

<b>Count Total Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave 04/01/2019 through 06/30/2020</b>							
<b>Male Count Taking PPL</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Multi</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>297</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>392</b>
<b>Female Count Taking PPL</b>							
<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian</b>	<b>American Indian</b>	<b>Pacific Islander</b>	<b>Multi</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>569</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>718</b>

\*Any count smaller than 10 has been suppressed in order to protect personal health information as individuals may be identifiable.

## **SECTION 2: DURATION OF LEAVE TAKEN BY PARTICIPANTS**

The duration of paid parental leave taken by participants is limited to 12 weeks for the Executive Branch, the Non-Executive Branch, as well as School districts and Charter schools. Given the capacity and authority of the Department of Human Resources over the input of data, DHR can only validate and report on the duration of leave data for state Executive Branch agencies. Excluding school districts and charter schools, State Agency employees took an average of 10.3 weeks of paid parental leave; men took an average of 9.3 weeks and women took an average of 11.7 weeks. The duration of leave for school districts and charter schools could not be reliably determined given the limits of the data reporting capacity of the Department of Human Resources.

## **SECTION 3: OUTREACH EFFORTS**

There were several ways in which information about paid parental leave was communicated both internally and externally. For example, the Governor’s Office spearheaded several communications about paid parental leave including an email to all State employees announcing the benefit; a video message from the Governor explaining the benefit, and an op-ed penned by the Governor and First Spouse on the benefits of paid parental leave. The DHR Employee Relations section advised employees and agencies individually on the administration of the new leave. Additionally, the Office of Women’s Advancement and Advocacy, working with several divisions, assisted in sharing information about paid parental leave to both internal and external audiences. Some of those outreach efforts included:

- Posters designed for external audiences that highlighted the benefit as one of many state employees enjoy
- Posters designed for internal audiences to ensure employees understood and were aware of policy
- Social media graphics on several channels and platforms
- Graphics on the TV screens of the Carvel building
- Frequently Asked Questions were developed and disseminated
- Testimonials from employees about taking paid parental leave
- Updates to materials used for onboarding new State employees

School districts and Charter schools were also asked to share how they communicated information about the benefit to both employees and external audiences, but as of the publication of this report, the Department of Human Resources has not received any information on those efforts, if any.

## **SECTION 4: IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAM ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

The Department of Human Resources also sought to ensure that paid parental leave was included in recruitment and retention efforts of State employees. The Division of Diversity and Inclusion, which collaborates with state agencies to identify practices that support the recruitment and retention of employees, integrated information about the paid parental leave benefit into recruitment efforts in the following ways:

- Information on paid parental leave was posted on the Delaware Employment Link website
- Social media graphics were created and shared on the Talent Acquisition social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Glass Door
- Paid parental leave posters were displayed and provided to the community at job fairs, college engagements, and other community events

- Paid parental leave, along with other State benefits, were included in a planned external marketing campaign

Several efforts were made to inquire about the recruitment and retention efforts made by schools, however as of the publication of this report, very little information was received from school districts pertaining to recruitment. One district responded and shared the following as reported by their HR Director, “we do formally advertise this benefit in our recruiting brochure and in our discussions at recruitment events with employees of all types.”

To gather feedback from State employees regarding paid parental leave and its influence on recruitment and retention, the Department of Human Resources both created a new survey and discussed improvements to the current new employee survey. First, the survey which specifically addresses an employee’s experience with the paid parental leave benefit was created and sent to all employees in the early summer of 2020. Second, the current new employee survey will be revised to include questions about paid parental leave (as well as other benefits). The relevant results of the new employee survey will be included in future iterations of this report.

In June 2020, the Department of Human Resources conducted a survey of State employees in order to evaluate employee perceptions about the paid parental leave policy. As of June 16, 2020, over 300 State employees took the parental leave survey providing an impressive response rate of 30%. Survey participants included 171 employees from school districts and 130 employees from the Executive and Non-Executive branches. The largest number of responses outside of school districts included the Department of Correction (9%), the Department Health and Social Services (7%), and the Departments of Safety and Homeland Security and Transportation each representing 5% of the total responses. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the employee perspective on the process of taking parental leave, its impact on recruitment and retention, the effect of the leave policy on families, and how the State can better support State employees with young children.

Respondents were asked to rate the responsiveness of agencies/supervisors/HR offices to requests for paid parental leave and questions regarding the program; the ease and clarity of the paid parental leave application and approval; whether the paid parental leave program had a positive effect on willingness to return to work with the State of Delaware; and if the State's benefits, including paid parental leave, were attractive to individuals seeking employment. Respondents were given the opportunity to add additional commentary related to those four areas. As the table below indicates, nearly 70% of employees strongly agreed that their requests and questions about paid parental leave were met with responsiveness, with additional 23% that agreed though not strongly. Additionally, 88% of employees felt the paid parental leave application and approval process was easy and clear. Regarding retention and recruitment, 79% of employees strongly agreed that this benefit had a positive effect on willingness to return to work with the State and 97% reported that the State's benefits, including paid parental leave, were attractive to individuals seeking employment.

	1- STRONGLY DISAGREE	2 - DISAGREE	3 - AGREE	4 - STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
My agency/supervisor/HR Office was responsive to my request for paid parental leave and questions I had regarding the program.	5.66% 18	1.89% 6	22.64% 72	69.81% 222	318	3.57
The paid parental leave application and approval process was easy and clear.	4.09% 13	8.18% 26	39.94% 127	47.80% 152	318	3.31
The paid parental leave program had a positive effect on my willingness to return to work with the State of Delaware.	3.46% 11	0.63% 2	16.98% 54	78.93% 251	318	3.71
The State's benefits, including paid parental leave, are attractive to individuals seeking employment.	3.14% 10	0.31% 1	12.89% 41	83.65% 266	318	3.77

The testimonials of State employees as well as comments gathered through the survey can speak directly to the positive impact paid parental leave has had over the first year of the program.

- “The parental leave policy helped my family by allowing me to stay home to care for and bond with our newborn son. The policy gave us the peace of mind by not having to worry about using accrued sick time or being out of work without pay. The time spent with your newborn is such a special time between the parent and baby and it is so important for the family’s wellbeing.”  
 Father, Principal in the Red Clay Consolidated School District
- “My wife and I adopted our daughter in December 2019 from Delaware foster care. Prior to the adoption, our daughter immediately took to my wife but was hesitant to fully bond with me. The paid parental leave has been a real blessing to our family as I was able to spend significant time with her to bond properly.”  
 Father, Division of Fish and Wildlife
- “Without paid leave it is unlikely that I would have been able to take these three months to spend with my first child. Being home with my daughter for three months has been truly life altering. The bond that I am able to build with my daughter is definitely the biggest benefit of having paid paternity leave. As a prosecutor, I have seen the importance of having a supportive family/parent, or the detriment of not having one. To sum it up, I feel that the ability to take paternity leave has put us on the inside track to success.”  
 Father, Department of Justice



- “I would just say that this benefit basically made it way more feasible for my wife and I to have kids! Teacher salaries aren't exactly very high for younger teachers who may be in their family starting years, so having the 12 weeks and also having the summer and various holiday breaks is allowing us, along with a little from our parents and sisters, to get through our baby's first year of life without having to pay for childcare---a HUGE deal for a family living on two teacher salaries. Being a new father has already been such a rewarding experience and I know in the years to come I'll be happy to look back on my 3 months at home with him as some of my favorite memories.”

Father, Teacher in the Brandywine School District

- “Absolutely love this new leave. I think it helps parents adjust to their new lifestyles as well as aids with self-care and the readiness to return to work.”
- “This is a fantastic tool in attracting and retaining family-oriented employees. I can only imagine an entry level employee making under 30K a year and wanting to start a family but not having sufficient time banked. This is an attractive benefit.”
- “This has a large effect on why I chose DELDOT!”
- “I think this was a great incentive added for our employees, because a lot of companies don't extend this like the state did for us.”
- “The paid parental leave are some of the perks that keeps making me to continue my employment with the state of DE, And it also avail me the opportunity to share and bond with my newborn.”
- “I think the paid parental leave program is AMAZING and I'm so thankful to be able to be paid without having to use sick/personal/unpaid time. Thank you for recognizing the importance of family. I think that PPL is attractive to people seeking employment.”

## **SECTION 5: PROJECTED PROGRAM PARTICIPATION**

Given that there has not been a significant change to the State's workforce, projected program participation for fiscal year 2021 (FY21) is estimated to be 888 employees, based on actual participation for the paid parental leave benefit in previous fiscal years. Relying on previous participation demographics, this estimation projects that approximately 575 women and 314 men would potentially utilize for the paid parental leave benefit in the next fiscal year.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, paid parental leave for State workers took effect April 1, 2019. Between April 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, 1,110 employees utilized the paid parental leave benefit. There were several efforts made to communicate about paid parental leave both internally and externally, for the purpose of retaining and recruiting quality State employees. State employees report an overwhelmingly positive impression of the paid leave policy and its impact on employees and their families. Paid parental leave has proved to be a valuable asset in maintaining the State's reputation as a great place to work.

However, the survey administered by DHR also presented several opportunities to learn about the rollout of the policy and the need for any improvements. Over 300 State employees took the

opportunity to share their feedback about the paid parental leave policy. Survey results highlighted an overwhelmingly positive impression of the paid leave policy and its impact on employees and their families. Important feedback regarding both the implementation of the policy and the transition to and from parental leave were elevated and should be taken into consideration for ways to improve upon the paid parental leave policy.

Much of the feedback on the implementation of the paid parental leave policy focused on the lack of knowledge about the nuts and bolts of the policy and the need for more consistent guidance from supervisors on the responsibilities and requirements of both employees and employers. DHR developed several documents for the Executive branch including FAQs and policy and procedures to assist in communicating about the policy. Additionally, posters which have already been created with information about the paid parental leave policy could be required to be posted in an area visible to all employees. Tutorial videos about the process for taking parental leave could also be created for employees. These are just a few possible recommendations for how to communicate more information about the policy. The key is to ensure that accurate and consistent information is provided to both employees and supervisors to all those eligible for paid parental leave benefit.

Lastly, as this was the first year of the report, there were several lessons learned related to data collection and reporting. Given the number of different agencies governing parental leave, data entry into PHRST may have been inconsistent at times. While all agencies were trained on the Policy and on how to input the required data as well as generate the appropriate reports by PHRST, DHR extracted all PHRST data for the report, including those agencies outside of the Executive branch. Moving forward, clearer expectations related to data input and collection can help to assure more reliable data reporting across all agencies, as DHR will not generate reports for non-Executive agencies in future years. Several issues related to the parameters for creating data reports impacted DHR's ability to accurately collect the data required for this report. DHR will continue to work with PHRST on improving and adapting the parameters to meet the data requirements of this report.

## REFERENCES

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