

THE IMPACT OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE IN DELAWARE, Fiscal Years 2022 & 2023

Department of Human Resources

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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 149th 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. To correct a lag in reporting, the following report includes information on both Fiscal Year 2022 and Fiscal Year 2023; however, each fiscal year's data will be reported individually within the report.

The report includes 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. 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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Overview

Delaware's paid parental leave policy grants eligible employees up to 12 weeks of parental leave upon the birth, adoption, or lawful adoption placement of a six-year-old or younger child. This leave runs concurrently with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the state's Short-Term Disability (STD) benefit. The entitlement to parental leave expires at the end of a 12-month period starting from the date of birth or adoption. Employees who leave their position with the State of Delaware before the 12-month period ends, will not receive payment for any unused parental leave. Finally, upon the conclusion of parental leave, the State of Delaware guarantees the reinstatement of eligible employees to the same or a comparable position unless unforeseen circumstances unrelated to the employee's leave arise.

In fiscal years 2022 and 2023, a total of 2,012 state employees, including those from the executive branch, non-executive branch, school districts, and charter schools, took advantage of the paid parental leave benefit. This report examines key aspects of the leave benefit, including the development and distribution of the policy to agencies, data on projected and actual participation, the duration of leave, internal and external communication of the policy, its integration into recruitment and retention efforts, and employee satisfaction with the benefit.

A survey of employees returning from paid parental leave found that 95% felt that the state's benefits, including paid parental leave, were attractive to individuals seeking employment with the state. Recruitment and retention efforts included highlighting the paid parental leave benefit on the Delaware Employment Link, posters explaining the benefit in common spaces, and integrated benefit information into recruitment flyers. Based on previous usage of this benefit and prior year birth counts, DHR projects 980 employees will utilize the benefit over the next fiscal year.

Establishing The Policy

To implement the paid parental leave legislation components, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) created a workgroup that developed an executive branch policy governing the application and granting of leave, including required notice and documentation. The policy was distributed to all 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 policy and PHRST codes were provided to agencies and schools.

Actual Program Participation

The Department of Human Resources requested a report for both Fiscal Year 2022 and Fiscal Year 2023 from PHRST to report on the utilization of paid parental leave. In FY22, 668 women and 373 men utilized the paid parental leave benefit. Out of 1,041 employees that used this benefit in FY22, 334 were executive branch employees, 55 were non-executive branch employees, and 652 were school district employees.

In FY23, 589 women and 382 men utilized paid parental leave. Out of 971 employees that used this benefit in FY23, 302 were executive branch employees, 50 were non-executive branch employees, and 619 were school district employees.

The following tables provide data on paid parental leave use with breakouts for gender and race/ethnicity for state agencies (including both executive branch and non-executive branch agencies), as well as school districts and charter schools. It should be noted that an employee has one (1) year from the date of birth, lawful adoption, or qualified placement to utilize the paid parental leave benefit. The reporting timeframe is per fiscal year, however, those who have a trigger date before the beginning of the new fiscal year are still eligible to use paid parental leave if they are within one year of the date of birth or adoption of a child six (6) years of age or younger. With approximately 25,000 state employees in executive branch agencies, non-executive branches, including the judiciary and legislative branches, school districts and charter schools, about 4% of all state employees utilized the paid parental leave benefit per fiscal year.

Count of Agency Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY22 07/01/2021 through 06/30/2022							
Male Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
152	37	17	*	*	*	*	219
Female Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
104	50	10	*	*	*	*	170

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

Count of Agency Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY23 07/01/2022 through 06/30/2023							
Male Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
161	41	12	*	*	*	*	226
Female Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
78	32	*	*	*	*	*	126

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

Count of School District Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY22 07/01/2021 through 06/30/2022							
Male Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
114	25	*	*	*	*	*	154
Female Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
411	40	27	12	*	*	*	498

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

Count of School District Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY23 07/01/2022 through 06/30/2023							
Male Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
107	34	*	*	*	*	*	156
Female Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
386	48	20	*	*	*	*	463

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

Count of Total State Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY22 07/01/2021 through 06/30/2022							
Male Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
266	62	23	13	*	*	*	373
Female Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
515	90	37	14	*	*	11	668

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

Count of Total State Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY23 07/01/2022 through 06/30/2023							
Male Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
268	75	17	12	*	*	*	382
Female Count Taking PPL							
White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Pacific Islander	Multi	Total
464	80	27	*	*	*	10	589

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

Duration Of Leave Taken by Participants

The provision of paid parental leave taken by participants is 12 weeks annually from the date of birth, lawful adoption or qualified placement 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 executive branch agencies. Excluding school districts and charter schools, state employees took an average of 12 weeks of paid parental leave. The duration of leave for employees in school districts and charter schools could not be reliably determined given the limits of the data reporting system.

Outreach Efforts

There are several ways in which information about paid parental leave is continuously communicated both internally and externally. For example:

- Posters highlighting this benefit as one of the many benefits state employees enjoy continued to be distributed and displayed to inform external audiences
- Posters for internal audiences to create awareness and inform employees aware of the policy continued to be distributed and displayed
- Frequently Asked Questions remain available on the DHR website
- A video about the benefit remains prominently featured on the Statewide Benefits website
- Updates were made to materials used for onboarding new state employees
- Delaware Employment Link highlights the paid parental leave benefit
- Recruitment flyers include information on this benefit
- 20+ job fairs events that distribute information on the benefit
- DHR social media campaigns
- DSCYF social media campaigns
- Delaware State Jobs social media campaigns
- DHR job promotion and hard-to-fill position campaigns included paid parental leave.

To gather feedback from state employees regarding paid parental leave and its impact on recruitment and retention, the Department of Human Resources surveyed state employees that had utilized the paid parental leave benefit. From July 2022 through June 2023, 542 employees from school districts and the executive and non-executive branches completed the survey. 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 of Delaware can better support state employees with young children. Respondents were asked to rate the responsiveness of agencies, supervisors, and Human Resources (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. 96% of employees completing the survey *agreed to strongly agreed* that their requests and questions about paid parental leave were met with responsiveness. Additionally, 88% of employees felt the paid parental leave application and approval process was easy and clear. Regarding retention and recruitment, 93% of employees agreed to strongly agreed that this benefit had a positive effect on willingness to return to work with the State of Delaware and 95% reported that the state's benefits, including paid parental leave, were attractive to individuals seeking employment.

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 on employee's and their families.

- The paid parental leave eased the burden of not immediately having to find/pay for child care, eased the stress of caring for a newborn, and positively impacted family life, making it easier to transition back to work.
- It positively impacted my mental and physical health and allowed me more time for bonding.
- Having Parental Leave was an enormous support to my family physically, emotionally and financially. This benefit allowed me to care for my new baby at home and adjust to life as a mom of two. I was relieved to not have financial stress from me being out of work since i was still receiving my paycheck. With my first child I had to save up time for almost five years so i would have enough time to be out and still be paid.
- It has allowed me to spend significant time with my daughter that I otherwise would not have. The ability to break up the 12 weeks has also allowed me to take leave when most needed to give my wife respite from childcare. For my first child's birth I hadn't worked at the State long enough to qualify and so this has been a much better experience.
- Paid parental leave was crucial for allowing time for healing from a major medical event, bonding with our baby, and settling into parenthood, all while not having to worry about changing finances or losing my job. Additionally, paid parental leave reduced the time our baby would need to go to day care, a financial and logistical benefit to us and a health and developmental benefit to the baby. Coming back to work after 12 weeks was still difficult, but it felt much less overwhelming than if I had needed to come back sooner.

Projected Program Participation

Projected program participation for fiscal year 2024 (FY24) is estimated to be roughly 980 employees, based on FY23 utilization, and demographic information for the school districts and agencies. There is an assumption of 1% enrollment growth across all populations.

Conclusion

The paid parental leave benefit continues to be an attractive and well-received benefit to the state workforce. In terms of potential improvements, given the number of different agencies administering parental leave, data entry into PHRST must be monitored routinely to generate consistent data for this report. While all agencies were trained on the policy and how to enter the required information and generate the appropriate reports by PHRST, DHR is responsible for extracting all PHRST data for the report, including those agencies outside of the executive branch. For executive branch agencies, DHR will continue to provide education on appropriate parental leave data entry at regular intervals during the year. The key is providing accurate and consistent information to supervisors and employees eligible for the paid parental leave benefit. To help assure a smooth experience across all agencies, DHR will create a series of toolkits for employees, supervisors, and human resources teams, outlining responsibilities and expectations related to the paid parental leave policy. Overall, paid parental leave continues to be a valuable asset to maintain the State of Delaware's reputation as a family-friendly workplace.