

# **THE IMPACT OF PAID PARENTAL LEAVE IN DELAWARE, Fiscal Year 2024**

**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. The State Parental Leave Law requires the Department of Human Resources to submit a report to the Delaware General Assembly and the Governor on the parental leave program annually.

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 are asked to 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. Despite significant and repeated outreach efforts to the above referenced school districts, DHR receives very little information. To provide the required data for the report, DHR extracted the statistics for all agencies and schools from the state's human resource information system; however, it is important to note that DHR 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. Parental leave runs concurrently (simultaneously) with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the state's Short-Term Disability (STD), as applicable, in accordance with the State's Disability Program Rules and Regulations. An employee is eligible for parental leave even if the employee has exhausted their FMLA time consistent with the law covering FMLA. If an employee becomes eligible for FMLA while on parental leave, the employee must apply for and use FMLA. Parental leave is also intended to supplement the State's STD benefit, if eligible, not to exceed 100% of an employee's creditable compensation following the birth of a child. 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 may not receive payment for any unused parental leave. Upon the conclusion of the parental leave period, 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 year 2024, a total of 893 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.

In a survey of employees returning from paid parental leave, 94% said 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 1,060 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. 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 Fiscal Year 2024 from PHRST to report on the utilization of paid parental leave. In FY24, 587 women and 306 men utilized the paid parental leave benefit. Of the 893 employees who took advantage of this benefit in FY24, 283 were executive branch employees, 38 were non-executive branch employees, and 572 were school district employees.

The following tables provide data on paid parental leave usage, broken down by 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 employees have 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 birth/adoption/placement 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 across executive branch agencies, non-executive branches, including the judiciary and legislative branches, school districts and charter schools, about 3.5% of all state employees utilized the paid parental leave benefit for the most recent fiscal year.

<b>Count of Agency Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY24 07/01/2023 through 06/30/2024</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>117</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>175</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>88</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>146</b>

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

<b>Count of School District Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY24 07/01/2023 through 06/30/2024</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>95</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>131</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>353</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>441</b>

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

<b>Count of Total State Employees Utilizing Paid Parental Leave FY24 07/01/2023 through 06/30/2024</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>

215	57	16	*	*	*	*	306
<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>
441	80	38	16	*	*	11	587

\*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 law allows state employees to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave annually from date of birth of a child, lawful adoption or qualified placement. The law applies to all state employees in the executive branch, the non-executive branch, as well as school districts and charter schools. Since DHR’s statutory authority is limited to executive branch agencies, DHR has no control over the input of paid parental leave data for school districts and charter schools. Therefore, DHR can only validate 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 available to state employees continue to be distributed and displayed to inform external audiences
- Posters for internal audiences to create awareness and inform employees about the policy continue to be distributed and displayed
- Frequently Asked Questions remain available on the DHR website
- A video about the benefit is 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
- Information on the benefit was distributed at over 20 job fairs and events
- DHR social media campaigns
- State agency social media campaigns Delaware State Jobs social media campaigns
- DHR job promotion and hard-to-fill position campaigns included paid parental leave.
- Paid Parental Leave benefits are discussed at the Seaford School District’s new teacher orientation, as well as posters, flyers and email communications are shared with all staff during the school year.
- The Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) posts and discusses DHR information during weekly staff meetings when relevant to staff.

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 2023 through June 2024, 206 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. 95% of employees who completed the survey said that they *agreed and/or strongly agreed* that their requests and questions about paid parental leave were met with responsiveness. Additionally, 90% of employees said the paid parental leave application and approval process were easy and clear. Regarding retention and recruitment, 93% of employees agreed and/or strongly agreed that this benefit had a positive effect on willingness to return to work with the State of Delaware. 94% 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 speak directly to the positive impact paid parental leave has had on employee's and their families.

- *Absolute life saver. Really helped provide stability in uncertain times. Helped me establish my new family and set up everything for my return to work.*
- *My leave helped me have time to recover and organize my myself and family to prepare me to confidently return to work and not feel like I missed out on family time or feel frazzled returning to work.*
- *Being able to receive a full paycheck, while not having to use up all of my annual and sick leave provides me coverage if something happens with my new baby in the future since I still have my leave on the books. This was a huge stress relief compared to having to use my personal time for my first two children.*
- *I was able to spend quality time with my family, and after the birth, I was able to help my wife during the transition. I was able to not have to worry about child care and how I would pay for it during this time. The impact on my family has been such a positive experience, mentally I was able to enjoy the long nights knowing I didn't have to be at work on a few hours of sleep. Overall, it was an amazing experience and I feel blessed to have that time with my family.*
- *This benefit has allowed my husband and I to be home with our newborn daughter for 24 weeks, as both of us are state employees. This is valuable time to not only bond and care for our child, but also time needed while we await our daughter getting into a daycare program (most daycare programs in our area have more than a year waiting list).*

## **Projected Program Participation**

Projected program participation for fiscal year 2025 (FY25) is estimated to be approximately 1,060 employees, based on FY24 utilization, and demographic information for the school districts and agencies. There is an assumption of 1% enrollment growth.

## **Epilogue Section 378**

Per the epilogue requirement of Senate Bill 325 of the 152<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, the Delaware Department of Education is required to report the number of persons who used paid family leave and whose vacancy was funded with substitute reimbursement funds in FY2024.

Epilogue Section 378 reads in part:

Section 378. Section 1 of this Act includes an appropriation for Substitute Reimbursement in the Department of Education, District and Charter Operations (95-02-02). Included in said appropriation is funding for paid family leave. For local education agencies, funding available for this program shall be limited to a maximum value of the daily rate of a Class A substitute as specified in 14 Del. C. § 1326 and current year other employment costs. Local education agencies shall submit the request for contractual substitute reimbursement to the Department of Education and funding shall be transferred to the local education agencies for eligible costs. The Department of Education shall submit a report to the Department of Human Resources detailing the number of persons using paid family leave no later than August 15 following each school year.

The chart below was provided to DHR by the Delaware Department of Education.

<b>Epilogue Section 378 Report</b>	
<b>LEA</b>	<b>Number of Persons on Paid Family Leave and whose vacancy is substituted using Substitute Reimbursement Funds</b>
Appoquinimink School District	52
Brandywine School District	25
Caesar Rodney School District	22
Cape Henlopen School District	16
Capital School District	8
Christina School District	12
Colonial School District	18
Delmar School District	3
Indian River School District	23
Lake Forest School District	8
Laurel School District	4
Milford School District	17
New Castle County VoTech School District	10
Polytech School District	5
Red Clay Consolidated School District	11
Seaford School District	13
Smyrna School District	19
Sussex VoTech School District	6
Woodbridge School District	7
Academia Antonia Alonso	-
Academy of Dover	3
Campus Community School	2
Charter School of New Castle	-
Charter School of Wilmington	3
Delaware Military Academy	-
Early College School at DSU	-
East Side Charter School	2
First State Military Academy	-
First State Montessori Academy	-
Freire Charter School	-
Gateway Lab Charter School	-
Great Oaks Charter School	-
Kuumba Academy	-
Las Americas Aspira Academy	10
MOT Charter School	5
Newark Charter School	5
Odyssey Charter School	3
Positive Outcomes Charter School	-
Providence Creek Academy	1
Sussex Academy	4
Sussex Montessori School	-
Thomas A. Edison Charter School	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>

## **Conclusion**

The paid parental leave benefit remains a highly valued and well-received asset within the state workforce. With multiple agencies managing parental leave, it is essential to routinely monitor data entry into PHRST to ensure consistency in the reporting process. Although all agencies have been trained by PHRST on the policy, data entry, and report generation, DHR is tasked with extracting all PHRST data for the report, including from agencies outside the executive branch. For executive branch agencies, DHR will continue to provide regular training on proper parental leave data entry throughout the year. Accurate and consistent information is crucial for supervisors and employees eligible for this benefit. To provide a consistent experience across all agencies, DHR has developed toolkits for employees, supervisors, and human resources teams, detailing responsibilities and expectations related to the paid parental leave policy. Overall, this benefit plays a significant role in upholding the State of Delaware's reputation as a family-friendly workplace.