Paid Family Leave

A summary of the scientific literature on paid family leave.



How This Impacts Children's Development

Paid family and medical leave policies allow parents to spend more time with their children, particularly right after birth, leading to reduced rates of children born pre-term or with low birth weight and prolonged

breastfeeding. The effects of paid family leave also include improved economic well-being, mental and physical health, parental engagement, and reduced infant mortality.

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Talking Points from the SRCD Brief

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- More children are living with two working parents or a single working parent, increasing the need for paid family and medical leave.
- The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides unpaid, job-protected leave to about 60% of workers, with only 40% receiving employer-sponsored paid leave.
- As of 2019, the U.S. lacks federal paid family and medical leave, though seven states and D.C. have implemented their own laws, starting with California in 2004.
- Almost half of working adults in the U.S. have used or expect to need leave for a seriously ill family member, but 10% report being unable to take leave when needed.
- Paid family and medical leave helps families care for loved ones while staying in the workforce, potentially reducing economic and social inequalities, especially for single parents and disadvantaged children.

Policy Considerations in the Brief

1. Implement federal and/or state paid family and medical leave insurance programs.
2. Restructure the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), including:
    - Providing job-protected leave for more workers.
    - Granting paid leave to workers.
3. Consider how other counties provide robust paid family and medical leave under their social insurance system.
4. Learn from states with implemented paid family and medical leave, such as California.

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