

New report shows paid leave transforms lives.

In a new, first-of-its-kind report, 1,000 Days finds that paid leave is a public health imperative with the potential to transform the lives of moms and babies in the U.S. The report analyzed a wide-ranging body of research on family and medical leave and its impact on maternal health and child health and development. The evidence shows that paid leave can improve the health of moms and babies, save lives and enable children to get a strong start to life:

- **Paid leave during pregnancy leads to fewer medical complications for both mom and baby.** This includes reduced risk of c-sections, reductions in low birthweight and preterm birth and reduced risk of postpartum depression and anxiety.
- **Paid leave has the potential to save babies' lives.** Researchers estimate that providing 12 weeks of paid leave in the U.S. could result in nearly 600 fewer infant deaths per year—a notable reduction in the face of about 22,000 infant deaths. Importantly, studies find a connection between paid leave and infant mortality, but unpaid leave has no effect.
- **Paid leave supports mothers to breastfeed and breastfeed longer, which improves the health of both mom and baby.** A mother is more than twice as likely to stop breast feeding in the month she returns to work compared to a mother who has not yet returned to work. This means too many babies miss out on breastfeeding's protection against pneumonia, respiratory infections and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and too many mothers are at greater risk for breast cancer, ovarian cancer and heart disease—leading killers of women in the U.S.
- **Paid leave can help families give their children a thriving start at a time when they are most vulnerable.** Research shows that paid leave can help parents cope with the financial stress and demands of caring for a new baby and can reduce the risk of a baby being abused or neglected.

Paid Leave Can Help Improve Outcomes for Moms and Babies

Evidence shows paid leave can help:



Reduce the risk of pregnancy-related health complications



Reduce the risk of postpartum depression



Increase breastfeeding rates, including initiation and duration



Reduce the risk of infant mortality



Reduce the incidence of babies born preterm or low-birthweight



Improve child health during infancy and childhood



Ensure safe and healthy child development



Reduce disparities in access to care and health outcomes

Call to Action: Paid Leave is a Public Health Imperative

The time has come to view paid leave as not just a policy choice but as a public health imperative. As the evidence shows, paid leave has the potential to improve the health of mothers and babies, save lives and enable children to get a strong start to life. To maximize this impact, policies cannot be exclusive to new mothers, but rather must be inclusive of all the caregiving and health needs of families. A program that is inclusive and comprehensive will best meet the needs of today's workers and their families.

Advancing a national paid leave policy will require new champions and advocates, especially those who work to improve maternal and child health outcomes and address health disparities. The evidence reviewed suggests that the structure of a paid leave policy matters. For paid leave to have the kind of impact that will drive improvements to maternal and child health and child development, the policy must:



Provide sufficient time off: Workers need access to a minimum of 12 weeks, but ideally 6 months (24 weeks), of paid leave annually to support the health and wellbeing of moms, children and their families.



Cover all employers and all workers: Policies must be inclusive of all workers to ensure they can care for themselves or a loved one. Paid leave must be available to all workers regardless of the size of their employer, the sector they work in, the length of their employment or whether they work full-time, part-time or are self-employed.



Ensure equitable economic security now and in the future: Workers should not have to decide between their health or caregiving responsibilities and their job. In addition, workers must retain the right to resume full paid employment after taking leave without fear of discrimination or retaliation. Policies must ensure that taking leave now does not threaten workers' current or future economic security.



Cover medical and family caregiving needs comprehensively: Any plan should be available for the full range of personal medical and family caregiving needs, such as those already established by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).



Learn more and get involved
at www.thousanddays.org