

Expanded Parental Leave Policy for County Employees

The County of Los Angeles (County) prides itself on being an Employer of Choice for current and prospective employees. The County offers its employees an unparalleled benefits package, focused on providing comprehensive care for employees and their families. Additionally, the County provides employees both defined pension and deferred contribution plans to help plan for retirement. The County also offers its workforce Federal and State mandated protected leaves of absence to support employees and their families that experience medical problems or life-changing events. These unpaid leaves, which align with federal and State legislation such as the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), California Family Rights Act (CFRA), and Pregnancy Disability Leave (PDL), provide employees with job security and maintenance of health care insurance. Furthermore, employees are entitled to paid leave under the California Kin Care law.

Leave options are particularly valuable to new parents, seeking time off to bond with a newborn or a newly placed child under adoption or foster care. Research shows

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that robust family leave policies have a tremendous impact on the retention and career trajectories of current employees, as well as the overall health and wellness of their families. New mothers, when given the opportunity to prepare for the arrival of a new child and recover from the strain of childbirth, have reduced maternal stress during and immediately after pregnancy, which in turn has been shown to improve the overall health and development of their children.

Although the County's current leave policies extend further than required by State and federal law, it is important that we periodically reexamine our policies to ensure that we remain on the forefront of employee wellness. Recent trends in human resource policies in the private sector show a movement towards standardized paid family leave options. A recent review of County leave policies by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) show that while Los Angeles County is a leader in employee leave policy benefits when compared to neighboring public agencies, the County lags behind large private sector employers in the adoption of paid leave policies for their employees. Compared to unpaid leave benefits, paid leave programs provide families with financial support during major life transitions.

California has historically led the nation in offering paid parental leave policies, becoming the first State in the country to pass a statewide paid family leave policy in 2002. California remains one of only three states in the nation that currently offers paid family and medical leave. California's Paid Family Leave (PFL) provides up to six (6) weeks of partial pay to individuals who need to take time off from work to care for an ailing family member or bond with a new child. Over 18 million California workers are

covered by PFL, which is funded through mandatory employee payroll deductions. Because Los Angeles County employees do not pay into the State Disability Insurance program, they are not eligible to receive PFL benefits. It is now imperative that the County review our leave policies to ensure that we are still providing our employees with the best options to navigate major life events and that we remain competitive in the changing national job market.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct:

1. The Director of Personnel, Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Director of the Women and Girls Initiative, to review responses from the Countywide Employee Climate Survey and determine if current County leave policies are meeting our employees' needs; and
2. The Chief Executive Officer, in collaboration with the Director of Personnel and in consultation with our labor partners, to determine the feasibility of an expanded Parental and Caregiver Leave Policy, and to submit recommendations to the Board in writing within 90 days.

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