

California Paid Family Leave Focus Groups

Draft Discussion Guide

Note: we are likely to need to cut some of these questions, due to time constraints (and some repetition), but these are the potential questions.

[Intro: Thanks for coming, purposes of discussion, assurances of confidentiality, all responses voluntary, chose pseudonym, any questions before start...]

1. Work history/work at or near birth of first child:

Were you working in the months before giving birth? When did you stop working? Why?

Have you returned to work since the birth of your child? Did you return working the same number of hours as before giving birth? About how many hours a week were you working when you had your child?

What kind of work did you do (industry/occupation)?

2. Knowledge of PFL and/or SDI:

At the time you had your child, did you know about the California Paid Family Leave program? The State Short term disability program? [verify what program name/title might be most familiar to participants]

If so, what did you know about it, what had you heard? Did you think you were eligible to participate? Why or why not?

How did you learn about it?

3. Actions at time of birth related to work:

What did you do about your job(s) when your baby was born?

Probes:

Did you leave your job?

Did you take paid time off? (If so, do you recall where the payment came from – your employer, the state?)

Did you take time off without pay from your employer?

Basically keep working?

Did you do some combination of things?

How did this work out for you?

How long did you take time away from work?

Were you satisfied with the amount of time off you had after giving birth?

What led you to return to work when you did?

Did your baby's father take time off of work when the baby was born? Paid or unpaid, do you know?

If the baby's father hasn't taken time off yet, does he plan to in the future?

Are you and the baby's father coordinating your time off so that one of you will be home with the baby while the other one is working?

4. Child care and supporting self and family after birth:

How long were you away from work after giving birth?

Do you have an established plan for childcare? (family, friends, or other free/economical option compared to daycare).

How have your plans for childcare affected your timing to return to work? Or your baby's father's?

How did you make ends meet while you were out of work?

If you got paid family leave or disability, did you return to work before the expiration of your benefits? If yes, why did you return early? If no, if you were able to receive benefits for a longer period of time, would you have delayed return to work?

5. Attachment to work, attachment to employer:

Did you go back to work? If so, when? If not, why not?

Did you go back to your old employer? If you did, why did you return to the same employer? If you did not, why not?

6. Non-use of paid leave/PFL and its implications:

If you did not use the state's PFL, why didn't you use it?

(Probe: didn't know about it, uncertainty over eligibility, potential work repercussions, seemed too complicated to apply/didn't know how, amount of money it provided, etc.)

Do you think there are ways having PFL might have helped you as a new parent?

Do you think there are ways it could have helped you with work?

Do you think there would have been disadvantages to using it if you had?

Do you think there were disadvantages to *not* using it?

7. Use of paid leave/PFL and its implications:

If you used PFL, did you find it helpful?

If so, in what ways did it help you?

If not, why wasn't it helpful?

Do you recall how many weeks of leave you took?

Did you combine it with any additional time off?

Do you think there were *disadvantages* to taking PFL? If so, what were they?

Do you think it affected your time as a new parent?

If so, in what ways?

Do you think it helped your baby? If so, in what ways?

Do you think it affected how you were able to do your job? If so, in what ways?

8. Wrap Up

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how you managed the time around the birth of your youngest child?

[Closing: Thanks, reassure confidentiality, questions, provide contact information, etc.]

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