

**Family Leave and Lower Income Families: Linkages between Mothers' Return to Work, Leave, and Child Care**

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**A. DECISIONS/ACTIONS RELATED TO WORK**

1. What job did you have around time of (or prior to) your most recent birth? What type of work? Where? How long had you been there?

Now let's talk about what happened with your employment because of the birth of your child – whether you quit your job, were let go, or went back to work, either with your current employer or a new employer.

2. Let's first hear from the women who voluntarily left their jobs:
  - a. When did you quit, before or after you gave birth?
  - b. Why did you decide to leave?
3. For the women who were let go:
  - a. When did it happen, before or after you gave birth?
  - b. What is your sense of why it happened? (possible pressure by employer, negotiations re. job, etc.?)
4. For the women who went back to their same employer, or plan to:
  - a. What led you to go back?
  - b. When did you (will you) go back?
  - c. Do you (or will you) have the same job? If it is different, how is it different?
    - i. Number of hours
    - ii. Shift
    - iii. Tasks and duties
    - iv. Wages
    - v. Location
  - d. Was that your employer's choice or yours? If your choice to make these changes, why did you choose to do this?
    - i. Child care arrangements (coordinate with family, provider...)
    - ii. Commute
    - iii. Other reasons

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0990-0421. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 75 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, and gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, OS/OCIO/PRA, 200 Independence Ave., S.W., Suite 336-E, Washington D.C. 20201, Attention: PRA Reports Clearance Officer.

5. For the women who went back to work but with another employer/job, or plan to:
  - a. Why did you (or will you) go back to work?
  - b. When did you (will you) go back to work?
  - c. Why to a new employer?
  - d. What type of job did you take/do you hope to get? (duties, hours, wages, location?)
6. How much time did you or do you plan to take off before returning to work?
7. Were your actions around employment (going back to same employer, amount of time off, etc.) what you had always planned? In other words, before you gave birth, what were your expectations for going back to work and taking time off?
8. If your actions were different from your plan, why was that?
9. How would you describe your transition back to work?
  - a. What was most challenging about it?
  - b. Where there things that made it easier?
10. What role did family members or other people in your life play in helping you go back to work?
11. Overall, what would you say mattered most in helping you return to work? (for the women who returned to work or expect to shortly )

**B. THE ROLE OF PFL**

1. How long did you take paid family leave (or do you plan to take it)? [change name for different state programs]?
2. Was that how long you had planned to take it? If you took PFL for less time than you were eligible for, why did you not take the full benefit?
3. Did your child's other parent also take paid family leave?
4. Generally (for all), what would you say the benefits of PFL have been for you and your family? [probes: child care, recovery, bonding, breastfeeding, etc.]
5. In what ways were they important?
6. In addition to PFL, how else did you support yourself financially during your leave? [TDI, additional paid leave from employer (sick leave, vacation), partner/husband, family, friends, WIC, food stamps/TANF...]
7. Were there any downsides to taking PFL? If so, what were they?
8. How supportive (or not supportive) was your supervisor of your taking PFL? Others in your work place? In what ways?
9. For those of you who either went back to work (same employer or new) or plan to:
  - a. Were/are there ways that using PFL helped you return to work (or is helping you get ready)? Probe for specifics re. arranging child care with family/friend or provider, physical recovery, role of job protection in RI—job held, ..... other factors. [Think about using checklist]
  - b. Which of these things do you think was most important in helping you go back to work?
  - c. Was there anything in particular about PFL that you think made it harder to return to work than if you had not had access to it? [note if anything about lack of job protection in NJ or CA]

- d. How would you change PFL to help mothers like you return to work more easily after you have a child?
10. For the moms who left their employer right before or after having your baby and did not go back (either quit or were let go):
  - a. Are there ways you think PFL could have helped you return to work if it were different in some way? [\$, job protection, amount of time etc.]
  - b. Is there anything else you think would have helped you return (maybe not directly related to PFL)?

**C. THE ROLE OF CHILD CARE**

1. For those of you who have returned to work, what child care arrangements have you made for your baby? (probe for family, husband/partner, friend, provider, center, how coordinate, pay, etc.)
2. How easy or hard was that to arrange? What were some of the challenges? What went well?
3. Are these the arrangements you wanted when your baby was first born?
4. How do they seem to be working out for your family?
5. When did you make these arrangements (right after birth, while on leave, at what point when on leave, etc.)?
6. Did PFL help you in any way to make these arrangements? If so, what role did it play? [probes: time to get voucher, arrange work shifts, coordinate with relatives/friends, etc.] If you had not taken PFL, do you think you would have these particular child care arrangements for your child? Why or why not?
7. For those of you who have not returned to work, has child care been any part of why not? In what way?
8. Is there anything about PFL that you think could be changed to make it easier to find the kind of child care you want for your baby that you feel would let you go back to work?
9. Is there anything else you think we should know about connections between PFL, working, and taking care of your family/child?