

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

ASPE Generic Information Collection Request
OMB No. 0990-0421

Supporting Statement – Section A

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Program Official/Project Officer

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Section A – Justification

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

Background

Around the time of childbirth, low-income families are at particular risk of falling into poverty for reasons including low-income mothers' relatively high rates of separation from work (Laughlin 2011, Stanczyk 2016). Passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (also known as Welfare Reform), with its time limits and work requirements, set the expectation that poor and low-income parents with young children work in the labor market. Paid Family Leave (PFL)—in the states that have it—provides a short period of partially subsidized wages to new parents so they can afford to take time off to care for their new child. Research indicates that PFL ultimately leads to higher rates of post-birth work attachment among mothers and higher rates of return to their prior employers, including among lower wage mothers (Bartel et al. 2014, Baum and Ruhm 2016). Further, it suggests that PFL reduces poverty following childbirth (Adema, et al. 2015, Stanczyk 2016). Low-income families are least likely to have access to paid family leave provided by their employers.

Three states—California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island—have established PFL programs. California's PFL program was implemented in 2004, New Jersey's (Family Leave Insurance) in 2009, and Rhode Island's (Temporary Caregivers Insurance) in 2014. These programs expanded on each state's pre-existing Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) program, which provide partial wage replacement to eligible women for disability related to pregnancy and birth. Eligibility for TDI and PFL are essentially the same, though only women are eligible for TDI since it covers disability due to pregnancy and child birth, while PFL is open to both parents to care for and bond with their child. A mother is typically eligible for up to 8 to 10 weeks of TDI partial wage replacement, and each parent is generally eligible for up to 6 weeks of partial wage replacement under PFL (up to 4 weeks in Rhode Island). In the interests of simplicity, for purposes of this document we refer to both inter-linked programs as PFL.

Existing research examines the overall experiences of lower-wage working parents who use PFL (for example, Tisinger et al. 2016, Silver et al. 2016, Setty et al. 2016) and of employers interacting with PFL programs (for example, Bartel et al. 2016 and Milkman and Appelbaum 2013). But research has not yet looked into the question of exactly how PFL contributes to stronger work attachment among low-wage parents who use the program. This study can provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms helping lower income mothers maintain their work effort following childbirth, including the role of informal and formal childcare, among other factors.

Therefore, in FY 2017 the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) funded a new project, *Family Leave and Lower Income Families: Linkages between Mothers' Return to Work, Leave, and Child Care*. This study explores the experiences of lower income mothers and their perspectives on paid family leave as a work support. It draws on a

convenience sample of lower income mothers with young children in each of the states with established PFL programs. We are seeking approval through the generic mechanism for this research.

This exploratory qualitative component of the study, which uses focus groups, seeks to learn more about the perspectives and experiences of a convenience sample of lower income mothers in California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island who worked prior to birth and used the state's PFL program. The focus groups address their use of PFL, attachment to work and their pre-birth employers, specific reasons for—and facilitators of—returns to work, actions taken related to work and child care arrangements after childbirth, and other experiences with PFL as a work support.

This project builds on and complements (and does not duplicate) other federal and non-federal efforts that explored the role of paid family leave programs in the lives of parents at childbirth and early infancy. It is relevant to HHS because of the emphasis on the experiences and perspectives of low-income working parents with very young children at a time when these families are at particular risk of falling into poverty and parents are at particular risk of detachment from the labor market (Laughlin 2011). While other federally funded research has examined paid family leave, this is the only research that we know of that specifically explores the experiences of low-income parents with PFL as a work support.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The aims of the study are to begin to understand better low-income parents' experiences with and perspectives on the factors that facilitated (or inhibited) their return to work after childbirth and the role that PFL may have played in supporting this.

We are seeking approval through this mechanism for:

Nine 90-minute focus groups conducted with lower income women who have used PFL in three states with established programs—California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. Of particular interest are: their use of PFL, attachment to work and their pre-birth employers, specific reasons for—and facilitators of—returns to work, actions taken related to work and child care arrangements after childbirth, and other experiences with PFL as a work support. All participation is strictly voluntary and focus group participants will use pseudonyms for the group discussion itself.

This work is not intended to inform policy decisions; it is exploratory in nature. The findings from the focus group discussions will not be generalizable—they are based on a convenience sample. The method of data collection was chosen due to the exploratory nature of this inquiry. Through the focus group discussions, the federal contractor will be able to collect more nuanced

and detailed information about the on-the-ground experiences and perspectives of a sample of low-income mothers near the time of the birth than is available elsewhere.

3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction

Data will be collected via in-person focus groups at community organizations with which the participants already have a relationship. The sample for this data collection will be one of convenience. Where possible, focus groups will take place adjacent to activities in which participants may already plan to engage in order to limit their travel time and other aspects of burden. A laptop computer will be used to take notes during the discussions. The discussions will also be audiotaped to ensure key themes are captured accurately.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information

To our knowledge, there is no information that has been or is currently being collected similar to this. This is an exploratory study to allow us to better understand the perspectives and experiences of a subset of working parents who took paid leave at the time of childbirth—lower income mothers of young children. ASPE staff has scanned the literature (see Winston 2014 and Winston et al. 2017) and met with experts. This information-gathering confirms the lack of similar existing data.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

No small businesses will be impacted or involved in this data collection.

6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently

This request is for a one-time data collection where the data have not previously been collected elsewhere.

7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5

There are no special circumstances with this information collection package. This request fully complies with the regulation 5 CFR 1320.5 and will be voluntary.

8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency

This data collection is being conducted using the Generic Information Collection mechanism through ASPE – OMB No. 0990-0421.

9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents

The contractor will provide participants with \$40 to help with child care, transportation, and other expenses associated with participating in the focus groups. Evidence shows that monetary remuneration bolsters recruitment and focus group attendance. Mothers of young children who may also be working are busy people. Low-income status places additional barriers to focus group participation, including lack of transportation or childcare. The amount requested—\$40 for a 90-minute focus group—is consistent with what other Federal agencies offer.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents

The Privacy Act does not apply to this data collection. Participants will not be asked about, nor will they provide, individually identifiable information. The agency will not be including a pledge of confidentiality; therefore, it is unnecessary to include a citation for the statute or regulation supporting a pledge. Most of the information collections under this mechanism have not collected personally identifiable information or information of a personal or sensitive nature.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

No information will be collected that are of personal or sensitive nature.

12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs

The estimate for burden hours is based on:

- (1) a 10-minute screener to be administered to a total of approximately 135 potential focus group participants (we expect about 15 people to be screened for each of nine groups) (Attachment A); and
- (2) nine 90-minute focus group discussions with a total of 72 participating individuals (we expect an average of eight participants per group); about 75 minutes will be used for the discussion (Attachment B), and about 15 minutes will be used for completion of an anonymous demographic questionnaire (Attachment C).

Estimates for hourly burden are calculated as 80 percent of the Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2016 mean hourly wage in the Oakland-Hayward-Berkeley Metropolitan Division (\$30.17), retrieved from:

http://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages_oakland.htm#

. Based on these data and calculations, the mean hourly wage for participants would be \$24.57.

It also does not adjust for fact that some participants will not be in the labor market, taking the position that their time still has value. Table A-1 shows estimated burden and cost information.

Table A-1: Estimated Annualized Burden Hours and Costs to Respondents

Type of Respondent	No. of Respondents	No. of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden per Response (in hours)	Total Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate	Total Respondent Costs
Potential PFL-using low-income mothers of young children: screener	135	1	10/60	22.5	\$24.57	\$552.83
PFL-using low-income mothers of young children: discussion	72	1	1.25	90	\$24.57	\$2,211.30
PFL-using low-income mothers of young children: anonymous demographics questionnaire	72	1	15/60	18	\$24.57	\$442.26
TOTALS*	135			130.5		\$3,206.39

*The total of 135 includes participating women that are screened but are not included in the focus groups, as well as those who are. Therefore, the total includes women who are screened but ultimately will not participate in a focus group and women who are screened and do participate in a focus group.

13. Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers

There will be no direct costs to the respondents; indirect costs include their time to participate in the data collection.

14. Annualized Cost to the Government

Table A-2: Estimated Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

Staff (FTE)	Average Hours per Collection	Average Hourly Rate	Average Cost
Social Science Analyst, GS 14	40	69.78	\$2,791
Estimated Total Cost of Information Collection			\$2,791

15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

This is a new data collection.

16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

The qualitative information shared by focus group participants will be collected in written form and audiotaped. After each focus group is complete, contractor staff will review the written notes within 24 hours, and audiotapes will be transcribed. Contractor staff will analyze the data by reviewing the session notes and summarizing the main themes from the discussion in a memo to be submitted to federal staff. All reporting will use participants’ pseudonyms; no actual names or other personal data will be reported.

Federal staff will also read the focus group transcripts and listen to the tapes. To the extent additional data analysis is warranted by the emerging themes identified by the contractor and federal project officer, the project officer may code the transcripts either manually or with a qualitative analysis software package in order to further analyze key themes. Together with the contractor, federal project staff will then determine the implications of these themes.

Timeline:

Completion Date	Major Tasks/Milestones
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December 2017	Seek commitments from partner community organizations to assist in focus group recruitment and logistics Submit request for OMB approval under existing generic PRA clearance
January 2018	Finalize recruitment plans Plan for focus groups Receive OMB approval under existing generic PRA clearance
January 2018	Recruit participants Finalize planning for focus groups Conduct focus group 1 in Alameda County, make adjustments as needed, complete California focus groups
February 2018	Conduct focus groups in Rhode Island Preliminary focus group reporting
March 2018	Conduct focus groups in New Jersey Preliminary focus group reporting
April 2018	Complete possible supplementary qualitative analysis Finalize results

17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate

We are requesting no exemption.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

There are no exceptions to the certification. These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.

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LIST OF ATTACHMENTS – Section A

Note: Attachments are included as separate files as instructed.

- A. Focus Group Eligibility Screen
- B. Family Leave and Lower Income Families: Linkages between Mothers' Return to Work, Leave, and Child Care—Discussion Guide
- C. Anonymous Demographics Questionnaire