Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) is the income a person receives from their employer, an insurer, or the government while they are away from work, so they can:

- Recover from a serious health issue
- Take care of a seriously ill family member
- Bond with a newborn or newly adopted child

The duration of the payments differs depending on the mechanism in place to provide PFML.

**Family-Friendly Employment Practices**

Family-friendly employment practices are increasingly promoted to ensure employee and community health. Stress and economic insecurity are risk factors for a number of health-related issues, including maternal and infant health, psychological distress, chronic disease, and obesity.

**Paid Family Leave (PFL)** is one important type of PFML, and provides income for caregivers in the event of a family member’s illness, or for bonding with a new child. PFL is a powerful family-friendly policy that has been linked to decreased stress and increased mental and physical health outcomes for mothers and babies. Additionally, PFL helps prevent child abuse and neglect, sexual violence, child and infant deaths, and reduces suicide. As Federal and State Legislators explore the policy, employers are increasingly taking it upon themselves to offer family-friendly programs like PFL.

"Paid leave ensures workers can fulfill family responsibilities and come back to work ready to focus and help build the business. Employees – not employers – would contribute to the fund; companies just add the deduction into other payroll withholding to cultivate the productive workforce they depend on."

**So What is FMLA?**

FMLA stands for the Family and Medical Leave Act. This 1993 federal law mandates that large employers (50+ employees) protect the jobs of workers filing for FMLA protection during their absence from work (up to 12 weeks a year) due to illness or injury of themselves or certain family members, including the birth of a child. Leave from work under FMLA is not paid – it is job protection.
Paid Family Leave in the United States

The United States is the only industrialized nation with “zero weeks” of Paid Family Leave – every other developed nation guarantees workers time off, with pay for these critical caretaking times. Most countries recognize that paid time off for a sick family member or a new baby is good for health and good for the economy. For example, PFL supports reductions in infant mortality (the United States has one of the highest rates), increased well baby medical visits and vaccinations, fewer depressive symptoms in mothers, more breastfeeding, and more involvement by fathers in the care of their young children. Employees with access to this benefit are better retained and more productive. Paying for leave can often be less expensive for employers than finding and training a replacement.

Source: Paid Parental Leave in the United States

Local Trends in Paid Family Leave

While the majority of American workers do not yet have PFL, global competition, cost analysis, and the popularity of family friendly business practices in general (like flex time, flex place, and job sharing) are making PFL more common among employers, and today more and more municipal employers offer paid family leave. Local employers with recently announced paid leave policies include: Boulder County, The Children’s Hospital, Pueblo County and the CU Anschutz Medical Campus.

In 2016 and 2017 the City & County of Denver participated in the Department of Labor’s Paid Family & Medical Leave Analysis Grant. Denver analyzed three years of employee FMLA data to understand the length of leave taken and how much of it was unpaid. Denver also surveyed more than 100 comparable employers to understand prevailing practices related to PFL. As of October 2017, 57.9% of employers surveyed in a study conducted by the City and County of Denver offered an average of 35 days of PFL.

What Are We Doing?

- Denver Public Health (DPH) and Denver’s Department of Public Health and Environment (DDPHE) are collaborating with other metro Denver health departments to increase visibility and utilization of all family friendly policies, including paid family leave.
- DPH and DDPHE are sharing grant analysis findings from a study conducted by the City and County of Denver that demonstrates the need and the benefits of PFL.

What Can You Do?

- Ask about paid family leave when you are: applying for a job, working at a company, considering a business partnership, or making consumer choices.
- Check out the trailer for the documentary Zero Weeks and attend a screening to learn more about paid leave in the U.S.
- Visit County Health Rankings & Roadmaps for effectiveness studies, expected beneficial outcomes, implementation resources, and examples of Paid Family Leave.
of paid family leave, through trainings and presentations.

• Contact Kellie.Teter@dhha.org to schedule a training or presentation about paid family leave for your organization.

About Denver Vital Signs
Published by Denver Public Health and Denver's Department of Public Health and Environment, Denver Vital Signs is a bi-monthly publication on important public health topics for policymakers, public health professionals and interested citizens of Denver County.