



Expanded parental leave means more than extra days off

To a newborn, 10 weeks is a lifetime. To his or her parents, it can be the foundation to a better life.

Yet, only 14 percent of private sector employees receive any paid time off during this critical bonding period, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics National Compensation Survey. This means that many new parents must navigate a difficult balancing act—between earning enough to support their growing family and providing the care their child needs.

Fortunately, times are changing. On April 1, Prudential Financial increased the period of 100 percent paid parental leave available to eligible employees and Prudential Advisors financial professionals to 10 weeks from four weeks for births and adoptions.

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Lucien Alziari,
Chief Human Resources Officer
for Prudential

This means that birth mothers, in combination with short-term disability benefits, can take 16 weeks of paid time off (full and partial pay), and that fathers and adoptive parents can take 10 weeks of paid time off. All new parents can also take an additional 16 weeks of job-guaranteed unpaid time off.

The increase is part of a growing trend that has seen America’s leading companies—from tech giants to financial services firms—revise their parental leave policies to attract top talent and improve the health of their workforce.

According to [Lucien Alziari](#), chief human resources officer for Prudential, “Our expanded paid parental leave is about the inclusive, supportive culture we want to create for our employees, and our ability to attract and retain top talent.”

The increase in leave comes on the heels of Prudential offering its employees the Expectant Parent Coach resource from LifeCare, which provides personal support, coaching and tools to successfully transition to and from a maternity and/or parental leave of absence. In addition, demand for lactation and breastfeeding space led Prudential to increase the number of lactation stations in its 24 locations across the United States to 54.

Prudential’s parental leave policy and benefits make it more competitive, but this change isn’t only about attracting talent. It’s about people. It’s about companies providing increased financial support during this critical time and encouraging employees to take full advantage of the leave they’re eligible for. And it’s about the deeper benefits the extra time will provide families long after the leaves have been exhausted.

Parents are looking for that extra time, too. According to [The New Dad: The Career-Caregiving Conflict](#), a 2017 report from Boston College’s Center for Work & Family, fathers today, more than ever, want to be active and engaged with their families. More than two out of every three dads surveyed expressed a desire to be an equal parenting partner.

“The desire to have it all, to be an ideal worker and a highly engaged parent, is an experience that many women have struggled with for decades,” the Boston College report notes. “Thinking of these work-life struggles as being felt acutely by men is new.”

There’s also a correlation between paid paternity leave and closing the gender pay gap. Research by the Swedish Institute of Labor Market Policy Evaluation shows that for each month of leave a father takes when a child is born, his female partner’s lifetime income rises 7 percent.

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***Kirsten Martinko,
Prudential employee***

Prudential employees are certainly welcoming the enhanced benefit.

Adam Hunter, manager and retail editor, Global Communications, whose wife is due in September with their first child, knows what the extra time—and the ability to break it up into three separate periods of two weeks or more—will mean to him and his family.

“The idea of spending some weeks up front and then also being able to be home for a while when my wife goes back to work makes a big difference,” he says.

“We won’t need to rely on paid childcare and I can

really spend the time to bond with my child.”

Rita Vapiwala, an associate manager of planning and analysis in financial management for Prudential, and an expectant mother, says she had already planned her maternity leave, but a good portion of it was going to be unpaid.

“I knew immediately what the extra weeks of paid leave would mean to us—financially, of course, but also to our peace of mind,” she says.

Kirsten Martinko, a mother of five and a family nurse practitioner who handles employees’ return-to-work and accommodation issues for Prudential’s Global Health Organization, has taken the first steps in adopting a child with special needs from China. She says the extra six weeks of fully paid leave and much-welcome help from Prudential’s \$10,000 adoption benefit will prove invaluable.

“We don’t know what to expect and exactly what our child will need when he or she is finally here,” Martinko explains. “Even if that just means extra doctor visits, it’s going to require a lot of extra time. And to get paid while taking it will be a huge bonus.”

For media interested in learning more about Prudential’s parental leave policies and workplace benefits trends, please contact [Peter Price](#).