Title: Public Health Benefits of Paid Family Leave for Parental-Infant Bonding

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Leaves That Pay

UCB Law School May 6, 2011
Paid Family Leave Pays Off for Bonding

- Applebaum and Milkman’s study shows that PFL
  - Increases parental perceived ability to care for child
  - Doubled the median duration of breastfeeding from 5 to 11 weeks in high quality jobs and from 5 to 9 weeks in low quality jobs.
Health Benefits of Maternity Leave Start Prior to Childbirth

- Leave taken Routinely Prior to Childbirth (Antenatal leave) Assists Mother’s Physical Wellbeing
  - Reduces obstetric complications among mothers delivering term infants
  - Decreases the likelihood of primary cesarean deliveries among women who deliver in the ninth month of pregnancy

*Potential Pathways for Time Off:*
  - Reduces fatigue and stress
  - Increases tolerance for pain
Health Benefits of Antenatal Leave

- Linked to Favorable Birth Outcomes
  - Decreases odds of a preterm delivery
  - Increases odds of prolonged gestation, especially for women in high strain jobs
  - Decreases perinatal mortality and low birth weight (if leave is paid)
  - All costly outcomes to the mother, the infant, the family and the medical care system suggesting that SDI in California is beneficial for promoting public health.
Health Benefits Also Accrue with Postpartum Leave

- Evidence on Maternal Physical Health:
  - A leave of at least 12 weeks increases maternal vitality
  - Improves positive ratings of health
  - Increases breastfeeding initiation and duration which is linked to reduced breast cancer risk

- But evidence is sparse
Health Benefits of Postpartum Leave

- Evidence on Maternal Mental Health:
  - Reduces short and long term depressive symptoms
  - Reduces anxiety
  - Elevates maternal responsiveness to infant cues
  - Decreases marital dissatisfaction
Postpartum Leave Improves Child Health

- Leaves longer than 12 weeks are associated with:
  - Improved physiological and emotional regulation in the infant
  - Fewer externalizing behaviors at age 1
  - Timely number of well-baby check ups
  - Complete immunizations
  - Breastfeeding initiation, establishment and longer duration
  - Decreases in infant mortality (paid leave)
Evidence on the Importance of Leave for Fathers

- Promotes bonding with the infant
- Improves gender equity

But evidence is very limited
Optimal Leave Arrangements?

- We really don’t know what is the optimal length of leave for family health.
- Emerging evidence suggests that maternity leave starting prior to delivery can improve health outcomes.
- Full recovery from birth can take up to 6 months or longer and is influenced by maternal health and behaviors, infant health and behaviors, partner support, community, and policy support.
Optimal Leave arrangements?

- Although it is hard to disentangle the effects of each of these actors, it is clear that research evidence suggests that paid leave has positive effects on health outcomes.

- No wonder that more needs to be done to promote uptake of parental leave in California and elsewhere in the US!!
“Women as half of all workers changes everything.”

THE SHRIVER REPORT: A WOMAN'S NATION*, STUDY BY MARIA SHRIVER AND THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

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