

**ACTION 2.4**

Create family-friendly employment policies and ensure that low-wage, part-time, and seasonal or occasional workers have access to these policies. Examples may include paid sick leave, parental leave, or reliable work schedules.

# CREATE FAMILY-FRIENDLY EMPLOYEE POLICIES

For children and families, the benefits of family-friendly workplaces are numerous and long-lasting. They include positive impacts on health, development and well-being, financial stability, and future career success. Working parents with access to family-friendly benefits can be engaged and committed employees without negatively affecting the well-being of their children. Greater access to family-friendly policies such as paid parental sick-leave are associated with many positive benefits throughout the lifecourse, including positive infant health outcomes, stronger school attendance and test scores, higher education attainment, and future career success.

## WHAT WE KNOW

The benefits of family-friendly workplaces are numerous, including positive impacts on health, development and well-being, financial stability, and future career success. Family-friendly policies such as paid parental leave, flextime, and subsidized child care serve a dual purpose. They foster children's healthy development through creating a more financially stable home environment while also benefiting the economic outlook of family-friendly employers who benefit from a healthier work environment, reduced employee health care costs, and fewer employee absences.

There are significant disparities among the demographic groups that have access to family-friendly benefits, with Black, Indigenous, and Latinx hourly and low-wage workers having the least access to these benefits. For instance, Latinx workers have significantly less access to paid leave, and Black and Latinx workers are significantly less likely to have the ability to telework.

**~5 MILLION WORKERS WOULD BE ADDED TO THE US WORKFORCE** if parents had access to more family-friendly benefits that enabled them to balance their commitment to their workplace with the needs of their families.

These disparities also unfold across gender, with twice as many Latina and Black women having to take unpaid time off work to care for children compared to white women and men of any race or ethnicity.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there are dramatic racial, ethnic, and gender differences in the likelihood that working parents' job characteristics limit their ability to invest in their children.

## Dive Into the Data

Mothers and fathers who have access to paid parental leave take an average of four weeks off; however, the major medical associations in the U.S. recommend a minimum of six to 12 weeks of paid parental leave to care for and bond with newborns.

In the southeastern region of the US, including NC, only **13% of families have access to the Family Medical Leave Act** through their employer. Explore this indicator and more through the [Pathways Data Dashboard](#).

## WHAT WE NEED

Most public and private policies that affect working parents are based on a two-parent household model where only one parent is working for pay. This is unaligned with our current reality—**only 3.4% of all North Carolina families** have a parent who is able to stay home full-time to care for children. This means that the majority of families in our state and across the country are struggling to operate within a system that doesn't adequately serve their needs.

We need a restructuring of workplace policies to reflect our reality. **Accommodations and support for pregnant workers, health insurance and wellness benefits, reimbursed or subsidized child care, and predictable scheduling** are all crucial in creating workplaces that will support well-being by enabling caregivers to support their families. Family-friendly policies benefit employers, employees, and young children.

Nearly **one in four** Americans have no access to even a single day of paid sick leave to care for themselves or for their children when they experience sickness.

## HOW TO SUPPORT

Large and small businesses are joining the efforts of initiatives like chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and other business associations join the efforts of initiatives like **Family Forward NC**, a North Carolina initiative championing the importance of family-friendly workplaces through a multi-pronged approach centered around an employer certification system. By going through the process to become a Family Forward NC Certified Employer, employers demonstrate to employees and other stakeholders that their workplace is one where pregnant workers, parents, and other caregivers will feel supported and can thrive. Investing in this initiative will help support the spread of workplaces that enable working families to thrive.

## INITIATIVES WORKING IN THIS AREA



**Think Babies** seeks to ensure that North Carolina's youngest children, prenatal to age three, benefit from effective and equitable public policies, programs, and funding so that all children have what they need to thrive: healthy beginnings, supported families, and quality early care and learning experiences. This statewide initiative has an intentional focus on communities of color and those furthest from opportunity and is led by a cross-sector network of state and local leaders.



**Family Forward NC** is a groundbreaking initiative fostering employer-led change and increasing access to research-based, family-friendly practices—big and small—that improve workplace productivity, recruitment and retention, grow a strong economy, and support children's healthy development across North Carolina. Family Forward NC has engaged more than 6,000 employers, business associations, workforce and economic development agencies and state and local early childhood organizations about the role they can play in creating a strong workforce of tomorrow.

**Visit the Pathways Action Map to learn more about these and other initiatives leading efforts in this area.**