

The Policy that Wasn't: Surveying the Maternity Leave Policies of Indianapolis-Area Healthcare Systems

Larissa Combs, Susan Ellsperman, Jillian Menegotto, Theresa Rohr-Kirchgraber, MD
Indiana University School of Medicine

The United States is one of only four countries that does not set national standards regarding paid maternity leave policies for working mothers. On a national level, 70% of working mothers took time off of work during their last pregnancy. In Indiana alone, over 83,000 women gave birth in 2013. In the greater Indianapolis area, the healthcare system serves as a microcosm of the national workforce. Of the 38,000 healthcare positions in this region, 48% are filled by females. Thus, it is important to address the lack of maternity leave legislation as it affects so many working mothers on both the national and state level.

Eight Indianapolis area hospital systems were surveyed (including IU School of Medicine), and none provided paid maternity leave for its employees. Mothers are left with the option of deferring to the national Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows for twelve weeks of unpaid leave following delivery. In addition, in certain hospital systems, employees can use accrued short-term disability if they are both eligible to apply for such benefits and have applied for coverage prior to the pregnancy.

The greater Indianapolis healthcare systems were surveyed as a representation of the workforce as a whole and found to have varying policies regarding the time off given to new mothers. All were the same in that they provided no paid leave. As probable future working mothers, this issue is of great importance. It must be recognized that these findings add undue burden to mothers and infants. Only three states have created a paid family leave policy, and though national bills have been proposed, they have not been fully supported. With so many affected by this lack of policy, changes must be made to better serve working mothers in the state of Indiana and the nation as a whole.