



# Paid Parental and Family Leave Act

## Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

### What is the Paid Parental and Family Leave Act?

The Paid Parental and Family Leave Act is an optional program that school districts can join by submitting a request to the state Department of Education. Employees in participating districts seeking paid leave can submit a request to the state Department of Education. Upon approval, they will receive [XX] weeks of paid parental leave or [XX] weeks of paid family leave, receiving [XX]% of their average weekly wage.

### Is twelve weeks of paid parental leave the standard?

It ranges by state. In [Tennessee](#), [Oklahoma](#), and [South Carolina](#), paid leave durations typically range from six to eight weeks. In [Arkansas](#), paid leave is twelve weeks. Likewise, states cover varying amounts of weekly wages.

### Who is eligible?

Full-time employees in a public school district or corporation are eligible for benefits after three months of employment. For those with less than a three-month work history, eligibility is determined based on their weekly scheduled work hours during employment.

### Who pays for the program?

There are two options for funding: the department can fund the program through an annual appropriation, or they can establish a cost-sharing agreement with participating school districts. In a cost-sharing agreement, the program expenses are shared between the department and districts, with supplemental funding provided for districts that serve a high percentage of low-income students.

### Who pays for coverage in the interim?

The state can assist by allocating additional funding for long-term substitutes or leave it to districts to determine funding responsibilities for long-term coverage.

### What is the difference between parental leave and family leave?

Parental leave covers childbirth, adoption, foster care placement, bonding time and parental responsibilities for the child's health. Family leave is for caring for a family member with a serious health condition or emergency.

### Who counts as a family member?

A biological/foster/adopted child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, spouse or domestic partner.

## What are the benefits?

The Paid Parental and Family Leave program can improve teacher recruitment and retention, leading to better student performance and cost savings. For example, teacher turnover not only [harms student performance](#), but also imposes significant [financial burdens](#) on school districts. By investing in parental leave programs, districts can effectively retain educators, ultimately leading to long-term cost savings.

## How does this help students?

An effective teacher is the most impactful school-based factor in a student's success. Effective teachers lead to higher academic outcomes, graduation rates, and even lifetime earnings. A [study](#) in Indiana found that 47% of educators took a break from teaching due to pregnancy, contributing to high teacher turnover. Since turnover and vacancies can negatively affect student performance, offering paid parental leave programs could incentivize teachers to stay in the profession, recruit more candidates to the education workforce, and ensure more classrooms are led by excellent teachers.



### Spotlight on Arkansas

Arkansas's [SB 426](#) grants state employees 12 weeks of paid maternity leave for childbirth, adoption or foster-care placement. Public school educators qualify if their district or charter school opts into a [cost-sharing agreement](#) with the Arkansas Department of Education.



### Spotlight on South Carolina

South Carolina provides up to [6 weeks](#) of paid leave at 100% of base pay for the birthing parent or primary caretaker in cases of adoption. The other parent is eligible for 2 weeks of paid leave at the same rate. The program is funded by the participating [school district](#).



### Spotlight on Tennessee

Tennessee offers [teachers](#) up to 6 weeks of fully paid parental leave following the birth, stillbirth, or adoption of a child. The state reimburses Local Education Agencies for the cost of leave.