

# Parenting Leave Practices

## Objective

To increase awareness and implement different parenting leave practices that promote gender equality and family-friendliness in the workplace.

## Why?

Family and caregiving responsibilities have traditionally fallen on women. This has particularly led to interruptions in women's careers and negative consequences for their position in the labor market: women's career advancement and salary development are slower, and their pension security is weaker.

For the wellbeing of families and for more equal employment opportunities, it is important that fathers also take parenting leave. In Finland's parenting leave system, parenting leave is in principle divided into equal quotas, but despite this, men currently take parenting leave less often and for shorter periods—for example, in managerial roles and in sectors such as construction and real estate, transport and logistics, and various industrial fields.

Workplaces can help to strengthen women's position in the labor market by supporting women's career development, preventing discrimination related to pregnancy and parenting leave, and encouraging fathers to participate more equally in childcare and to take parenting leave.

Investing in family-friendly workplace practices and parenting leave policies increases employee wellbeing and commitment, as well as enhances the workplace's attractiveness and employer reputation.

Finnish legislation and collective agreements across different sectors provide a wide range of parenting leave options, such as flexibly shared parenting leave and partial childcare leave.

## Examples of Parenting Leave Practices

Below are suggested measures and practices related to parenting leave. These should be easily accessible, for example in workplace guidelines.

- Compile clear and easily accessible instructions on parenting leave and on how to apply for related benefits. Ensure that the instructions and support are available in all languages used within the multilingual work community, such as Finnish and English.
- Record the training and career plans of an employee taking parenting leave – and of the employee returning from leave – during development discussions. This helps ensure that career development, progression, and salary advancement do not slow down due to parenting leave. Also discuss how the skills gained during parenting leave can be applied in their work.
- Plan well in advance of the start of the parenting leave how the employee’s tasks will be organised – for example, by distributing tasks or hiring a replacement. Ensure that the rest of the team will not be overburdened.
- Agree with the employee going on parenting leave about how, on what matters, and how often they wish to be contacted during the leave. For example, do they want to receive invitations to workplace events? Also agree on the timing of contact and any re-orientation before returning to work.
- Ensure that the employee returning from parenting leave can return primarily to their previous duties or similar ones.
- Assign a mentor to an employee returning from parenting leave to support reorientation and reintegration into work.
- Review with the returning employee all practices that support the reconciliation of work and family and discuss their need for flexibility. If necessary, allow adjustments to duties, part-time work, or reduced or compressed working hours.

### Strengthening the Supervisors' Competence

- Ensure that supervisors have sufficient knowledge about the current parenting leave scheme and the reforms introduced by Finland’s 2022 parenting leave reform – for time parent leave can be taken. Today, the leave policies also better recognize diverse family situations, such as blended families, rainbow families, and cases where a child dies during the time parenting leave.
- Familiarize yourself in advance with different parenting leave models and respect the family’s wishes where possible.

- As supervisors, create a safe atmosphere so that employees feel comfortable disclosing their plans to take parenting leave well in advance, without fear of for example pregnancy or parenting leave discrimination.
- Think ahead about how to handle situations such as:
  - the death of a child
  - a parent's spouse (e.g., a blended family bonus parent or partnership parent) taking parenting leave
  - adoptive parenthood

## **A Safe and Encouraging Work Culture**

- Create a family-friendly work culture together within the work community – one that allows for an open and safe atmosphere when discussing families and different family situations, children and childlessness, wishes to have a family, and plans to take parenting leave.
- Celebrate and respond positively when an employee or colleague shares news about a pregnancy or another joyful family event.
- For example, give flowers or another gift, such as a baby bodysuit with the workplace logo or a blanket knitted collectively by the work community.
- Support fathers and other non-birthing parents in sharing parenting leave equally with the birthing parent.
- Managers act as role models for the staff when fathers in managerial positions also take longer periods of parenting leave.
- Highlight experiences of parenting leave through workplace communication channels, such as the intranet, blogs, or sector magazines.
- Ensure that local workplace agreements and written policies on parenting leave recognize all parents, guardians, their partners, and other adults involved in a child's life.

## See the other method cards

- [Practices for Reconciling Work and Family](#)
- [Practices that consider different family forms and situations](#)
- [Practices for Preventing Pregnancy Discrimination and Parenting Leave Discrimination](#)
- [Family-Friendliness as Part of the Workplace Gender Equality Plan](#)

## Sources and further information

- [Reconciling work and family | Finnish Institute of Organisational Health](#)
- [Families | Kela](#)
- [Työntekijä perhevapaalla | työnantajat | Kela \(in Finnish\)](#)
- [Family leave | Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland](#)
- [Family leave | Occupational Safety and Health Administration in Finland](#)
- [Pregnancy and parental allowance: Payment period calculator | Kela](#)
- [Work – family life balance | Mothers in Business \(MiB\)](#)

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