

AWP Gold Standards

Employment law around parental leave policy is continuing to evolve, with varying interpretations depending on state and local statutes. In the Jewish community, many organizations have established policies, following consultation with their attorneys, which provide equal parental leave to both men and women. Other organizations, also based on legal consultation, distinguish between paid maternity leave for birth mothers, recognizing their need to recover following childbirth, and paid parental leave for fathers, partners, and adoptive parents.

The following AWP “gold standard” recommendations are presented as aspirational goals. What has already been achieved by some Jewish organizations can serve as models for the entire community. However, each organization will need to customize its policies and practices, following consultation with legal counsel.

- **Paid Maternity Leave.** AWP recommends that all Jewish organizations aspire toward twelve weeks of paid maternity leave. This can be linked to tenure, with four weeks of paid leave for each year of employment, up to twelve weeks.
- **Paid Parental Leave.** AWP supports the aspiration to provide generous, equal benefits to all parents. At a minimum, AWP recommends six weeks of paid parental leave to all father/partners and adoptive parents.
- **Parental Leave for Part-Time Staff.** AWP recommends that organizations offer parental leave benefits on a pro-rated basis to eligible part-time staff.
- **Unpaid Parental Leave.** Under the Family Leave Medical Act (FMLA), organizations with 50 or more employees are required to offer twelve weeks of unpaid leave to both parents, following childbirth or adoption. At the very least, AWP recommends that all Jewish organizations, regardless of size, adhere to the FMLA for parental leave.
- **Formal Flexibility Policy.** AWP recommends that Jewish develop formal, written flexibility policies, with consistent guidelines for accessing and retaining these privileges. Informal flexibility already exists in many organizations. The shift to formal policy will improve organizational effectiveness and remove obstacles for women professionals on the career trajectory.