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Is California's Paid Family Leave Program a Bellwether for National Implementation, Success?

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It's no secret that California, where I live and telecommute for Illinois-based Winning Workplaces, has been largely an economic failure in recent years. While Silicon Valley continues to do well (did you hear that Google is going to embark on its biggest expansion to date this year?), overall the state has unemployment of 12.5%, the second-highest in the nation after Nevada.

Yet, a new report by researchers at the Washington, DC-based Center for Economic and Policy Research and the City University of New York shows that an employee benefit that Winning Workplaces has long touted as part of a successful people practices program – paid family leave – is substantially helping the state's businesses, even as it alleviates the stress of their workers.

Today on the Sloan Research Network Work and Family Blog, Mary Curlew pulls some revealing findings from this employee engagement research. According to Eileen Appelbaum and Ruth Milkman's survey of 500 workers at over 250 employers, California's 9-year-old Paid Family Leave (PFL) program had either a "positive effect" or "no noticeable effect" on:

- Productivity (89%),
- Profitability/Performance [Order Generic Cialis Online without Prescription](#) (91%),
- Turnover (96%), and
- Employee morale (99%).

This is hard data that can't be ignored by business leaders who don't think paid leave leads to improved organizational metrics. For those critics, we have more data to share. Not surprisingly given California's status as our most populous state, it had the highest number of small businesses that applied for our 2011 Top Small Company Workplaces award with Inc. Magazine: 37, or 11% of our 342 total applicants this year.

Among the 37 California-based award applicants, here's the breakdown in the share that were profitable in 2010 and average employee turnover in 2010 among those that offer paid leave starting at one year of employment, versus those that offer no paid leave:

Applicant State	Paid Time Off at One Year (Days)	Profitable in 2010	2010 Avg Turnover
California	0	75%	16.5%
California	17.5	91%	15.3%

As you can see, among our research sample those that offer paid leave tend have slightly lower turnover; also, more of them are profitable. (I should note that among those that offer paid leave, the average number of days/year is 17.5, with a range from 5 to 36 days.)

Do you think this data suggests that all other states should implement a paid leave program? Please share your thoughts in the comments.

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