

Do I Really Have To Give Baby-Daddy Leave?



Times have changed in regards to parenting roles and expectations. Men are playing a bigger part in the lives of their children and taking on more caregiving responsibilities.

Under the Family Medical Leave Act and some states “mini-FMLA” laws, eligible employees are able to take protected time off from work for baby bonding. While many of these laws have been in effect for well over a decade, it is only in the last few years that more men are using their entitlement to FMLA for baby-bonding purposes.

Many employers ask if any paternity leave exists, forgetting that FMLA and state FMLA laws (where applicable) allow male employees to use this leave for baby bonding.

Employers need to keep up with the times and recognize the importance of providing this leave to both men and women, and not unintentionally discouraging men to do so.

Do:

- Notify employees that baby bonding leave is available to both men and women under circumstances where the company is required to provide such leave under state or federal law.
- Post required FMLA Notices and include a policy in your handbook if you employ 50 or more employees.
- If aware, meet with soon-to-be fathers to review eligibility for FMLA or state family leave and provide required notices.
- Assure employees that employment or future opportunities will not be denied if baby bonding leave is taken.
- Document an employee’s request for baby bonding leave and ensure that the leave is designated properly.

Don’t:

- Assume fathers are not covered under family leave laws, because they did not give birth.
- Assume that men are not interested in taking this type of leave.

- Assume that employees, including men, are already aware of all their rights under family leave laws.
- Assume that an employee must specifically ask for baby bonding leave to invoke his/her rights.
- Assume that an employee has to be married to take baby bonding leave

Take away for employers - don't overlook dad's right to baby bond, or so called paternity leave.

Check your state law to determine if there are similar laws for small employers.