

Blog Post

Celebrating Working Moms: How Companies Can Support Mothers in the Workplace

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With Mother's Day coming up on May 12, it is a great time for companies to review their workplace policies regarding working moms, and update or supplement them as needed.

Studies consistently show that women in the workplace double the talent pool, improve company performance, and lead to financial gains. However, despite these benefits, research also shows that women are five to eight times more likely than men to have their employment affected by caregiver responsibilities. And those effects are largest for women with children younger than five at home. These statistics highlight the need for continued attention to workplace policies that support working moms in the workplace.

What Is Required

Companies are *required* to provide certain protections and benefits to their employees both before, during, and after childbirth, and those federal requirements include:

- [Pregnancy Discrimination Act \(PDA\)](#) – The PDA amended Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to clarify that Title VII's longstanding prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex includes

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pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions. This prevents employers from taking any adverse action against a pregnant employee because of their pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions.

- Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) – The PWFA protects employees and applicants who have known limitations relating to pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical conditions by requiring employers provide them reasonable accommodations, absent an undue hardship on the employer's business.
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) – If you are a covered employer, then you are generally required under the FMLA to provide your employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for medical or certain family obligations, including childbirth, adoption, and the placement of a foster child.
- Providing Urgent Maternal Protections for Nursing Mothers (PUMP) Act – Under the PUMP Act, almost all employers are required to provide reasonable lactation breaks in a private space to their employees for up to one year following the birth of the employee's child.

In addition to these federal requirements, depending on where your company is located or has workers, you may have to provide additional protections pursuant to state and local laws. For instance, many states require employers to provide their employees with sick leave, which not only covers serious health conditions but also would allow employees to take time off to care for their children when they are sick and/or require medical appointments or treatments.

Additional Support to Consider

In addition to the above requirements, companies could also consider implementing programs and

policies that provide additional support and ensure the workplace is supportive of working moms.

As every parent knows, finding good childcare is extremely important and is often a large financial expense. Companies can help by providing childcare benefits to employees, such as access to a platform to find childcare (i.e., a care.com membership), discounts or subsidies to local day cares, or dependent care flexible spending accounts. Larger companies may even consider implementing on-site childcare services.

In addition to childcare support, companies may also consider offering flexible working arrangements, including hybrid or remote work schedules, flexible working hours, or temporary reduced or part-time schedules. In fact, some states even require private employers to give eligible employees time off from work to attend school-related activities.

Companies should also offer support to moms as they return to work following any leave. This could include a designated return-to-work plan which focuses on integrating employees back into the workflow and ensuring they do not have too much, or too little, work upon their return to the office. It could also include a return-to-work meeting with HR or a manager where the employee would have an opportunity to discuss any concerns they have or accommodations they may require (such as a lactation room).

Companies may also consider implementing informal employee resource groups, where co-workers and fellow parents have a space to discuss and share tips, tricks, and concerns specific to their needs in the workplace.

If you need assistance with or have questions regarding your workplace policies, please contact your Akerman labor and employment attorney.

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