Appendix B: The logic model of the FMLA

The Family and Medical Leave Act is designed to address employees' need to balance their work duties with their own health needs or caretaking responsibilities for newborns and seriously ill family members. When evaluating the effectiveness of programs and policies, logic models help illustrate how programs or policies are intended to address specified outcomes. A logic model provides a visual representation of the relationships between policies and regulations (inputs) and participant outcomes (outputs). The logic model below illustrates the problems or needs that the FMLA was designed to address, the specific inputs of the FMLA, as well as the intermediate outputs and longer-term outcomes the FMLA was designed to impact.

Logic model of the FMLA

Needs

Increasing number of families in which all parents work

- Uneven access to and limited employer policies that support working parents with caregiving responsibilities
- Inadequate job security for employees who need time off for health needs
- Caretaking and family responsibilities disproportionately affect women's careers and job stability

Inputs: Policy Provisions

Job-protected unpaid leave from work for:

- The birth of a child or placement of an adopted child or foster-care child and to bond with a new child within one year of birth or placement
- To care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition
- An employee's own serious health condition
- Any qualifying urgent need arising from the foreign deployment of the employee's spouse, child or parent

Intermediate Outputs

Increased leave-taking among employees with family and medical needs

- Increased employment stability for workers with family or medical needs
- Increased ability to care for family members with health needs
- Time and flexibility for recovery for workers with health conditions

Long-term Outcomes

- Improved workfamily balance
- Preserved family integrity and stability
- Increased family economic security
- Reduced gender– based employment discrimination
- Better health and developmental outcomes for children*
- Improved worker health*

Source: diversitydatakids.org created this logic model based on the FMLA legislation and research evidence on key outcomes

*Health outcomes are inferred from research evidence, but are not directly listed as a key outcome in FMLA legislation.¹

There is no definitive evidence that many of the key goals listed in the FMLA – such as promoting economic security, preserving family integrity and promoting work-life balance – are causally linked to unpaid time off. While one may logically assume that job-protected leave would positively impact these outcomes, research has not fully established policy impacts, partially due to data limitations. Defining and measuring "work-life balance" and "family integrity" is challenging, and in general these outcomes have not been extensively studied in relation to the

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FMLA. Other outcomes, such as economic security, have been measured in various ways, such as looking at the impacts of the FMLA on women's wages and employment stability and infant health, but have not been studied using an experimental design.^{2; 3}

Finally, while the FMLA does include gender equality and reduced discrimination in its goals, researchers have not evaluated the Act's effectiveness in reducing gender inequities. The Act does not address its potential to exacerbate inequitable access and financial barriers to taking temporary leave from work that many lower-income and lower-educated workers face. This omission translates into the policy's design and implementation. The unpaid and unfunded design of FMLA leave makes it unaffordable for many low-income workers, and the eligibility requirements disqualify many low-income workers completely. These constraints highlight the importance of building equity into the foundation and goals of a policy. In the case of the FMLA, the lack of equity goals in the policy design and implementation translates into real repercussions for low-income workers that may exacerbate inequities in access to job-protected leave.

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Endnotes and citations

- 1. Rossin, M. (2011). The effects of maternity leave on children's birth and infant health outcomes in the United States. *Journal of Health Economics, 30*(2), 221–239. doi:10.1016/j.jhealeco.2011.01.005.
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- 3. Han, W. J., Ruhm, C., & Waldfogel, J. (2009). Parental leave policies and parents' employment and leave-taking. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 28*(1), 29-54. doi:10.1002/pam.20398.

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