

# **Exploring the Relationship between the CA Paid Family Leave Program and the Well-Being of Low-Income Families**

ASPE Generic Information Collection Request  
OMB No. 0990-0421

## **Supporting Statement – Section A**

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### **Program Official/Project Officer**

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## Section A – Justification

### 1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

#### Background

Research indicates that paid family leave at the birth of a child can have positive effects on child and parental health and wellbeing, and on subsequent maternal work outcomes (for summary see Winston 2014). But low-income families are least likely to have access to paid leave provided by their employers.

California’s Paid Family Leave (PFL) program, passed in 2002 and implemented in 2004, is frequently cited as a potential model for other states and/or for a federal paid family leave program. It expands on the state’s pre-existing Short-term Disability Insurance (SDI) program, which provides partial wage replacement to eligible women for disability related to pregnancy and birth. Eligibility for SDI and PFL are essentially the same, though only women are eligible for SDI since it covers disability due to pregnancy and child birth, while PFL is open to both parents to care for and bond with their child. A mother is typically eligible for up to 8 to 10 weeks of SDI partial wage replacement, and each parent is generally eligible for up to 6 weeks of partial wage replacement under PFL. In the interests of simplicity, for purposes of this document we refer to both inter-linked programs as PFL.

The PFL eligibility requirements are relatively modest, which allows it to reach lower income parents better than other state programs. But take-up among these families is low (Milkman and Appelbaum 2013). Further, there is limited information about how low-income PFL-eligible parents view and have experienced the program or what they and their families do in the absence of paid leave.

Therefore, in FY 2015 the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) funded a new project, *Exploring the Relationship between the CA Paid Family Leave Program and the Well-Being of Low-Income Families*. This study explores the perspectives on, and experiences with, paid family leave of a convenience sample of lower income California parents with young children. We are seeking approval through the generic mechanism for this research.

This exploratory qualitative component of the study, which uses focus groups, seeks to learn more about the perspectives, opinions, and experiences of a convenience sample of low-income mothers in California who worked prior to birth and were eligible for PFL. The focus groups address their knowledge about and experiences with PFL, access to other resources to support their families, decisions about work and childcare immediately after childbirth, and perceptions about how use or non-use of PFL influenced their families’ health and wellbeing.

This project is building on and complementing (and not duplicating) other federal and non-federal efforts focused on promoting a deeper understanding of the role that public paid family

leave programs play in the lives of parents at childbirth and early infancy. It is relevant to HHS because of the emphasis on the perspectives of low-income parents with very young children, a time when these families are at particular risk of falling into poverty and parents are at particular risk of detachment from the labor market (Laughlin 2013). While other federally funded research is examining paid family leave, this is the only research to explore specifically the experiences of low-income parents and families.

## **2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection**

The aims of the study are to begin to understand better low-income PFL-eligible parents' knowledge about, perspectives on, and experiences with access to and take-up of PFL, decisions about work, decisions about child care, access to other family supports, and perceived relationships between leave and family health and wellbeing.

We are seeking approval through this mechanism for:

Four 90-minute focus groups conducted with PFL-eligible lower income women in two urban areas in California. Of particular interest are: how low-income mothers perceive paid family leave related to birth; their knowledge, perspectives, and experiences with the California program; and their perspectives on and decisions about child care, labor force attachment, and family health and wellbeing. All participation is strictly voluntary and focus group participants will use pseudonyms for the group discussion itself.

This work is not intended to inform policy decisions; it is exploratory in nature. The findings from the focus group discussions will not be generalizable—they are based on a convenience sample. The method of data collection was chosen due to the exploratory nature of this inquiry. Through the focus group discussions, the federal contractor will be able to collect more nuanced and detailed information about the on-the-ground experiences and perspectives of a sample of low-income mothers near the time of the birth than is available elsewhere.

## **3. Use of Improved Information Technology and Burden Reduction**

Data will be collected via in-person focus groups at community organizations with which the participants already have a relationship. The sample for this data collection will be one of convenience. Where possible, focus groups will take place adjacent to activities in which participants may already plan to engage in order to reduce their travel time and other aspects of burden. A laptop computer will be used to take notes during the discussions to save transcription time later. The discussions will also be audiotaped to ensure key themes are captured accurately.

## **4. Efforts to Identify Duplication and Use of Similar Information**

To our knowledge, there is no information that has been or is currently being collected similar to this. This is an exploratory study to allow us to better understand the perspectives and experiences of a subset of working parents eligible for paid leave at the birth of a child, lower income mothers of young children. ASPE staff has scanned the literature (see Winston 2013) and met with experts—this information-gathering confirms the lack of similar existing data.

#### **5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities**

No small businesses will be impacted or involved in this data collection.

#### **6. Consequences of Collecting the Information Less Frequently**

This request is for a one-time data collection where the data have not previously been collected elsewhere.

#### **7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines of 5 CFR 1320.5**

There are no special circumstances with this information collection package. This request fully complies with the regulation 5 CFR 1320.5 and will be voluntary.

#### **8. Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Efforts to Consult Outside the Agency**

This data collection is being conducted using the Generic Information Collection mechanism through ASPE – OMB No. 0990-0421.

#### **9. Explanation of Any Payment or Gift to Respondents**

The Contractor will provide to participants a \$50 gift card to a local store such as Target as remuneration for their time and effort in coming to and participating in the focus groups. They are low-income mothers with young children, and some of these mothers will have hourly jobs. This amount is appropriate and effective, given the high cost of living in San Francisco and Los Angeles and the length of the focus group (a total of 90 minutes). In addition, evidence shows that monetary incentives bolster recruitment and focus group attendance. Mothers of young children who may also be working are busy people. Low-income status also places additional barriers to focus group participation, such as lack of transportation or childcare. According to Krueger and Casey (2014), “it may be more efficient to pay more for incentives.... [to] increase the likelihood that people will show up,” and concluded that “...amounts of \$50 to \$75 usually work for public and nonprofit studies,” (p. 78). In addition to increasing attendance, Krueger

and Casey also note that "...as the incentive goes up, recruiting time goes down," (p. 78). This is especially important for the current study because of the tight timeline for recruiting.

## **10. Assurance of Confidentiality Provided to Respondents**

The Privacy Act does not apply to this data collection. Participants will not be asked about, nor will they provide, individually identifiable information. The discussion will focus on their knowledge about, perspectives on, and experiences with California's state paid family leave program. All data will be de-identified so as not to reveal the respondent. Participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement at the start of the discussion that reiterates the voluntary nature of participation in the group and their right to decline to respond to any discussion questions.

## **11. Justification for Sensitive Questions**

No information will be collected that are of personal or sensitive nature—all participants will use pseudonyms for the discussion and all reporting will be de-identified (relying only on the pseudonyms). Prior to the discussion, respondents will be informed that they may decline to respond to any question if they find it of a sensitive nature.

## **12. Estimates of Annualized Burden Hours and Costs**

The estimate for burden hours is based on:

- (1) a 10-minute screener to be administered to a total of approximately 80 potential focus group participants (we expect about 20 people to be screened for each of four groups) (Attachment A); and
- (2) four 90-minute focus group discussions with a total of 40 participating individuals (we expect an average of 10 participants per group); about 75 minutes will be used for the discussion (Attachment B), and about 15 minutes will be used for completion of an anonymous demographic questionnaire (Attachment C).

Estimates for hourly burden are calculated as 80 percent of the Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) 2014 mean hourly wage in the San Francisco-San Mateo-Redwood City Metropolitan Division (\$33.34), retrieved from: [http://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages\\_sanfrancisco.htm#](http://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages_sanfrancisco.htm#). Based on these data and calculations, the mean hourly wage for participants would be \$26.67. It also does not adjust for fact that some participants will not be in the labor market, taking the position that their time still has value. Table A-12 shows estimated burden and cost information.

**Table A-12:** Estimated Annualized Burden Hours and Costs to Respondents

Type of Respondent	No. of Respondents	No. of Responses per Respondent	Average Burden per Response (in hours)	Total Burden Hours	Hourly Wage Rate	Total Respondent Costs
Potential PFL-eligible low-income mothers of young children: screener	80	n/a	.167 hrs. (10 min.)	13.36	\$26.67	\$356.31
PFL eligible low-income mothers of young children: discussion	40	n/a	1.25	50	\$26.67	\$1333.50
PFL eligible low-income mothers of young children: anonymous demographics questionnaire	40	n/a	.25	10	\$26.67	\$266.70
<b>TOTALS</b>	80	n/a		73.3		<b>\$1,956.51</b>

**13. Estimates of Other Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers**

There will be no direct costs to the respondents other than their time to participate in the data collection.

**14. Annualized Cost to the Government**

**Table A-14:** Estimated Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

Staff (FTE)	Average Hours per Collection	Average Hourly Rate	Average Cost
Social Science Analyst, GS 14	40	67.00	\$2,680

<b>Estimated Total Cost of Information Collection</b>			<b>\$2,680</b>

### 15. Explanation for Program Changes or Adjustments

This is a new data collection.

### 16. Plans for Tabulation and Publication and Project Time Schedule

The qualitative information shared by focus group participants will be collected in written form and audiotaped. After each focus group is complete, contractor staff will review the written notes within 24 hours, and audiotapes will be transcribed. Contractor staff will analyze the data qualitatively by reviewing the session notes and summarizing the main themes from the discussion in a memo to be submitted to federal staff. All reporting will use participants' pseudonyms; no actual names or other personal data will be reported.

Federal staff will also read the focus group transcripts and listen to the tapes. To the extent additional data analysis is warranted by the emerging themes noted by the Contractor and federal project officer, the project officer may manually code the transcripts in order to further analyze key themes. Given the small number of data collections, manual coding will be more efficient than using a software package such as Atlas.ti. Together, federal project staff will then determine the implications if these themes.

#### **Timeline:**

Completion Date	Major Tasks/Milestones
November 2015	Seek commitments from partner community organizations to assist in focus group recruitment and logistics
December 2015	Submit request for OMB approval under existing generic PRA clearance Finalize recruitment plans Plan for focus groups
January 2016	Receive OMB approval under existing generic PRA clearance Recruit participants Finalize planning for focus groups Conduct focus group 1 (San Francisco), make adjustments as needed
February 2016	Conduct focus group 2 (San Francisco) Conduct focus groups 3 and 4 (Los Angeles) Complete focus group reporting

March 2016	Complete possible supplementary qualitative analysis Finalize results
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**17. Reason(s) Display of OMB Expiration Date is Inappropriate**

We are requesting no exemption.

**18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

There are no exceptions to the certification. These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.

**REFERENCES**

Krueger, Richard A. & Casey, Mary A. 2014. “Participants in a Focus Group.” In *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (5<sup>th</sup> ed. pp. 78). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Laughlin, Lynda. 2011. “Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns of First-Time Mothers: 1961-2008.” Washington: U.S Census Bureau.

Milkman, Ruth and Eileen Appelbaum. 2013. *Unfinished Business: Paid Family Leave in California and the Future of U.S. Work-Family Policy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Winston, Pamela. 2014. “Work-Family Supports for Low-Income Families: Key Research Findings and Policy Trends.” Washington: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation.

**LIST OF ATTACHMENTS – Section A**

Note: Attachments are included as separate files as instructed.

- A. Focus Group Eligibility Screen
- B. California Paid Family Leave Focus Groups, Draft Discussion Guide
- C. Anonymous Demographics Questionnaire