

timeline for maternity leave preparation

Communication and planning are critical to supporting new parents when they return to work.



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A white paper by [Maven Clinic](#) noted that while 75% of expecting mothers say they're excited to go back to work after giving birth, 43% of them end up leaving their jobs. Communication and planning are critical to supporting new parents, particularly mothers, when they return to work.

Below is a compilation of best practices to help employers plan for an employee's maternity leave. Each piece can be used on its own. While adopting parents also take maternity leave, there are specific considerations when an employee is pregnant so this resource is aimed at expectant mothers.



employee shares pregnancy news with the organization, usually HR or manager (often 12-15 weeks into typical 40-week pregnancy)

- Employee will often first share the news with those whom they have a good comfort level and relationship.
- Congratulate them and offer your support.
- Keep the news confidential until given permission to share by the employee.
- Share any benefits or resource information you might have so the employee can review it.
- Set up a meeting between the employee and an HR representative to discuss benefits.
- Learn about pregnancy and parental rights. See the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry video, [What Minnesota employers need to know about pregnancy and parental rights](#).
- Know the employee will need to attend antenatal or prenatal care appointments throughout her pregnancy.
 - For a first child, there are approximately 10 prenatal appointments and seven for subsequent pregnancies.
 - However, some women will require more prenatal care if there are health problems or if they are expecting multiples.



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of expecting mothers say they're excited to go back to work after giving birth



43%

of them end up leaving their jobs

- Be prepared to make any necessary workplace accommodations. Here are some **ideas** for different conditions, though these are the most common:
 - Accommodate shift changes to go to doctor's appointments
 - Allow time to sit when they might otherwise stand or alternative seating accommodations
 - Permit possible work-from-home hours or telecommuting
 - Avoid lifting heavy objects and honor any activity restrictions
- Determine the timing of anticipated leave, knowing this might change given increased knowledge of potential benefits.
- Determine a plan to share the news with team members.
- Share this checklist if it makes sense: [Bringing Up Baby: A Guide to Workplace Parental Leave Resources](#).

key questions for the employee to consider

- How long do they plan to be on leave?
- Does the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) apply to their leave?
- What level of communication are they okay with during their leave, if any? (occasional emails, phone calls, none)





employee shares the news with team members (once leave timing is determined)

- Update the team (preferably in person) with a timeline of their colleague's absence.
- Discuss process adjustments and backup notifications, along with any new training requirements.



have the employee document day-to-day responsibilities and consider key questions (weeks 15 - 20)

Soon after the employee announces their pregnancy, have the employee record their day-to-day responsibilities to set up an efficient training program for a temporary replacement or colleagues who will cover the work. This will be helpful for when the leave starts and also in case the employee needs to depart sooner than anticipated. The document should include:

- A detailed description of tasks and processes
- Key details about routine deliverables
- Names and contact information for relevant internal and external contacts



determine if work will be redistributed or outsourced temporarily (by 22 weeks)

- Weigh the core business and noncritical activities that the departing employee handles.
- Keep core responsibilities in-house to reduce risks to the business; outsource less-critical activities (e.g. administrative tasks).
- Line up new assignments a month or so before the employee leaves to allow time for proper training and a smooth transition.

key questions for the employee and manager to consider

- What projects can they complete before going on leave?
- What projects will probably need to be taken over by coworkers during their leave?
- Are they willing to help cross-train others on tasks before their leave?





encourage your employee to fill out these three documents (25-30 weeks)

This article, [She Might - Maternity Leave Plan Template: Keep Your Career on Track](#), has helpful templates and suggestions from the employee's point of view.

1. [Maternity logistics](#) (include if people are allowed to contact the employee and if so, who and when)
2. [Responsibilities & Communications Tracker](#)
3. Reentry plan and things to consider:
 - Identify their point of contact while on leave and who organizes their return
 - Clear communication and expectations
 - Flexible work options such as [working from home](#), [hybrid model](#), [job sharing](#) or [working part-time](#)
 - What paperwork does the employee need to fill out with HR
 - Discuss any [childcare discounts available](#) or [support for identifying childcare available](#) through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or subscription to [care.com](#). An EAP is a voluntary, work-based program that offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems.
 - [Breastfeeding accommodations and support](#)



just before the employee has the baby

- Determine the plan to share the news that the baby has arrived and with whom
- Write the out-of-office message. Here are some templates: [She Might - Maternity Leave Out-of-Office Message Structure & Templates](#)
- Have the employee set clear and firm communication expectations during their leave, previously set in the maternity leave plan
- Determine the person (or people) who can reach out to the employee while they're on leave, usually the HR contact or their direct manager



during the maternity leave

- Respect the employee's communication expectations
- Check-in to see how they're doing (don't talk about work)
- Send a gift
- Invite the employee to visit if they are interested in doing so



return to work

A return-to-work program can help reintegrate the employee back into the workplace, which benefits both the employee and the employer. The end goal is to decrease turnover and increase retention and boost employee satisfaction.

- Schedule regular check-ins with the new parent upon their return to the workplace and check-in to see how they're doing (don't talk about work).
- EAPs are often widely underutilized and underpromoted, so if your company offers one, review some of the resources available.
- Offer a 30-day snapshot of what to expect and what is expected in that first rough month back – clarity breeds confidence.
- For new mothers, address lactation rooms or where they can pump in privacy and review guidelines for breaks. Note workplace requirements for the State of Minnesota, as set in statute in January 2022. [Breastfeeding Information for Workplaces – MN Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](#)



here are three great resources

- [Maven for Business | Maven. The Digital Clinic for Women. \(mavenclinic.com\)](#)
- [Bright Horizons | Return to Work: How to Succeed at Bringing New Parents Back After Leave | Bright Horizons®](#)
- [12 ways your company can help new moms transition back to work – Insperity](#)
- Be mindful of anti-mom bias in the workplace.
- [Opinion | The Open Secret of Anti-Mom Bias at Work – The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)
- [How to Deal With Bias Against Working Moms VIDEO – Lean In](#)



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