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# NJDOL Announces Pilot Program to Help New Parents Navigate State Leave Benefits

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TRENTON** – The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) has announced the launch of a new one-year Paid Leave Navigator Pilot program in Mercer County.

Under the pilot, which is to run through October 2026, navigators will assist new parents with understanding and accessing the state benefits programs available to them, namely, [Temporary Disability Insurance](#) and [Family Leave Insurance](#). Navigators will also support parents in planning their leave time, understanding job protection laws, and applying for appropriate benefits. The pilot aims to increase the uptake of paid leave benefits in Mercer County, expand language access, improve family experience, and reduce application errors that can delay claim processing.

Community health workers and doulas with [Trenton Health Team](#) and [The Children's Home Society of New Jersey](#), both located in Trenton, are trained as navigators for the pilot program. These navigators will offer flexible support to fit family schedules, including help communicating with employers and healthcare providers, along with assistance in clients' native languages.

"Easing the transition for new parents and ensuring they take full advantage of the paid leave benefits available to them is essential to improving our maternal and infant health outcomes and supporting our young families," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Bringing home a new baby comes with many new challenges, and we know that those early days are crucial for the health and well-being of both mom and baby. This is about offering support to New Jersey families from the very beginning so that new parents can focus on what matters most – their children."

"The Paid Leave Navigator Pilot program is a crucial step towards giving more New Jersey families the support they need to understand and access their state paid leave benefits," **said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. "With one-on-one assistance, we are ensuring New Jersey workers can enjoy cherished moments with their new child without choosing between their family and their paycheck."

"Welcoming a new child should be a time of joy, not stress over paperwork or lost income," **said Lisa Asare, President & CEO of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority**. "The Paid Leave Navigator Pilot ensures that every New Jersey family – regardless of background or circumstance – can access critical benefits. By helping parents understand and navigate these essential programs, we're promoting healthier outcomes for both mothers and infants, and advancing our shared goal of equitable support for families across the state."

The Paid Leave Navigator Pilot is funded by [The Burke Foundation](#), which is centered on enhancing the lives of children and families, as well as the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#), which champions health equity. [New Practice Lab](#), a program within [New America](#) that aims to improve family economic security and well-being through improved social policy design and delivery, has partnered with NJDOL to co-design and launch the pilot.

"At the Burke Foundation, we believe every family deserves a healthy beginning," **said Executive Director Atiya Weiss of the Burke Foundation**. "Building on our record of investing in evidence-based innovations that strengthen New Jersey families, we're proud to support this groundbreaking pilot with trusted community navigators to help more parents access paid leave – building the evidence for solutions that can scale across the state."

"At RWJF, we are committed to paving the way together toward a future where health is no longer a privilege, but a right," **said Program Officer Catherine Malone of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**. "We are proud to partner with NJDOL, New America's New Practice Lab, and Burke Foundation, to support and learn from this important project to make access to paid family leave more equitable, so that every family in New Jersey has the opportunity to thrive."

**New Practice Lab shared in a statement:** "Working with our dedicated partners at NJDOL and Trenton-area community organizations, the New Practice Lab is excited to launch a new pilot to support families in accessing paid family leave so they can heal and bond with their child. This effort builds off of paid family and medical program delivery lessons learned from our nearly six-year collaboration with NJDOL and other states, including listening and learning directly from people served about barriers to access."

"Trenton Health Team is proud to partner with the New Jersey Department of Labor, New America, and Children's Home Society on this pilot," **said Cheryl Towns, B.S.N., R.N., who serves as the Chief Community Care Officer with the Trenton Health Team**. "This collaboration strengthens the work of our Community Health Workers, who play a critical role in supporting families across the City of Trenton. By helping

residents understand and access paid leave benefits, we're advancing health equity and making a meaningful impact in moments that matter most."

"We are incredibly proud to partner with the New Jersey Department of Labor and The New Practice Lab on the Paid Family Leave Navigator pilot," **said Julie Dees, CEO and President of The Children's Home Society of New Jersey**. "This initiative is a perfect fit with the mission of The Children's Home Society of New Jersey to save children's lives and build healthy families. Access to paid leave is a critical tool for family well-being, yet too many new parents face hurdles in getting the benefits they've earned. By providing dedicated, community-based navigators, we will ensure more families can successfully utilize their paid leave, leading to greater financial stability, better maternal and infant health outcomes, and ultimately, stronger foundations for our children across New Jersey."

NJDOL will collaborate with the navigators to provide ongoing technical assistance and training. The department will evaluate the pilot program with a research partner to determine if it improves access to benefits, reduces administrative burden for families, and make recommendations for expanding to additional counties.

New parents may be eligible for [Temporary Disability Insurance](#) for pregnancy and childbirth recovery and [Family Leave Insurance](#) for bonding with a new child. A worker's job could also be protected under separate state and federal laws like the [New Jersey Family Leave Act \(NJFLA\)](#) and/or the [Federal Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#).

In [July 2022](#), NJDOL introduced a [Maternity Coverage Timeline Tool](#) to provide expecting parents guidance about coverage periods for Temporary Disability Insurance and Family Leave Insurance. [Earlier this year](#), the department, in partnership with the Office of the Attorney General's Division on Civil Rights (DCR) and the New Jersey Office of Innovation, launched a [Job Protection Checker](#), an interactive digital tool designed to help workers navigate New Jersey's job protection laws related to family and medical leave. Starting in September, NJDOL has also been rolling out a series of updates to the Temporary Disability online application to improve user experience and reduce application errors that can delay claim processing.

While the Paid Leave Navigator Pilot focuses on Mercer County to start, NJDOL funds community-based organizations across the state to increase workers' awareness and access to their rights and benefits through the [Cultivating Access, Rights and Equity \(CARE\) grant](#) program. The grant is currently in its fourth year of funding.

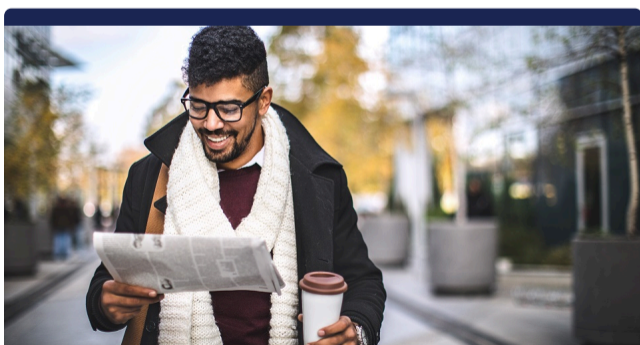
A [brief from the Rutgers School of Public Health](#) found that New Jersey's expansion of our paid leave programs in 2019 and 2020 was associated with a sharp 70% increase in the use of family leave benefits among state residents. Research shows that access to paid family and medical leave benefits is associated with increased breastfeeding initiation and duration, increased attendance at postpartum visits, lower risk of postpartum depression, and lower odds of maternal and infant hospital admissions.

For more information on the Paid Leave Navigator Pilot program, visit: [www.MyLeaveBenefits.NJ.gov/navigator](http://www.MyLeaveBenefits.NJ.gov/navigator).

For more information on the state's paid family and medical leave benefits, visit: [MyLeaveBenefits.NJ.gov](http://MyLeaveBenefits.NJ.gov).

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