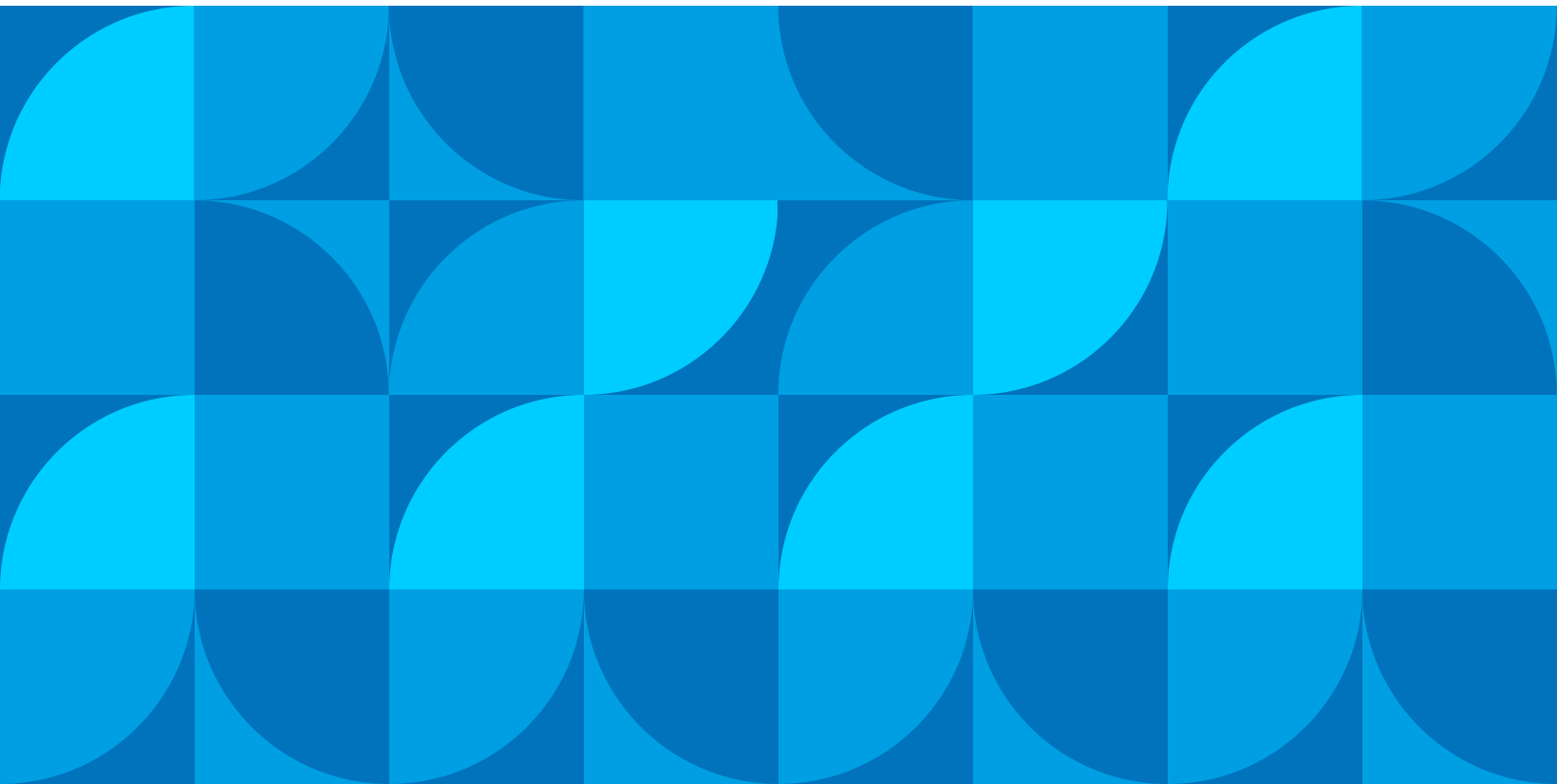




# **Paid Family & Medical Leave for the Jewish Community Conversation Guide**



To access this resource and more visit:


<https://womensrabbinicnetwork.org/Family-Leave>

This guide was created by WRN in partnership with the Center for Parental Leave Leadership. Please use it as a supplementary resource to accompany the WRN video series on Paid Family and Medical Leave to:

- Deepen your understanding of the topic.
- Engage in productive dialogue with partner leaders: clergy, Jewish professionals, and volunteers.
- Determine the next steps for your organization or institution around paid family and medical leave.

*This conversation should take no more than an hour, including watching the videos.*

## Overview



Ensuring access to, and destigmatizing utilization of paid family leave will have lasting benefits for the Jewish community and greater society.

Jewish ethics and our sacred texts guide us to understand paid family and medical leave as a human right<sup>1</sup> and Jewish moral imperative, not a negotiable employment benefit. In Exodus 1, we learn of the many people responsible for Moses' survival and evolution: Shiphrah and Puah, the courageous midwives who not only successfully delivered him, but also defied Pharaoh to ensure he survived; Miriam, Moses' sister, who dutifully followed her brother as he floated down the Nile to safety; and Moses' own mother, Jochebed, who nursed Moses under the guise of being a stranger. It is this narrative—amongst others—that highlights the importance of caregiving as a Jewish value.

Implementing paid family and medical leave will have far-reaching positive impacts, including supporting the financial security and career advancement of female-identified employees, as well as removing the gendered stereotypes of caregiving roles at home and work more broadly. Ensuring access to, and destigmatizing utilization of, paid family leave will have lasting benefits for the Jewish community and our greater society.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpt from WRN's Family and Medical Leave Policy Standards for the Jewish Community, p. 3.

## Before You Have the Conversation

1. Decide which stakeholders should be part of this conversation. You may want to include board members or a search/hiring committee, your clergy, or other Jewish professionals.
2. Make sure everyone has received the links to [the videos](#) and [WRN's Family and Medical Leave Policy Standards for the Jewish Community](#).
3. Share your institution's family and medical leave policy (if you have one) with all participants.
4. It is recommended that you watch the videos together. In person, hybrid, or virtually all work. If people decide to watch the videos in advance and then rewatch them together, that also works well.
5. Designate who will be leading the conversation. Make sure to give all participants opportunities to join in the conversation and ask questions.
6. Share or print the response pages below. These were created to assist with note-taking and action planning. Consider having another volunteer record and summarize your work for record keeping and to share with other stakeholders after the meeting.

## Getting Started: Videos and Discussion

1. Watch each video with your group.
2. Discuss each question with a designated note-taker to record your responses. It is recommended to use the response sheets provided at the end of this study guide.
3. Time your discussions. Dedicate roughly 20 minutes to watch each video and answer the accompanying questions before moving on to the next exercise.



## WHAT is Paid Family and Medical Leave and WHY You Should Care

(Video length 7:34; Total activity time ~ 20 mins)

1. What is our current organizational policy for family and medical leave?
  - How much time for leave do we give?
  - Do we have paid or unpaid leave (or a combination of both)?
  - Who is eligible (and for what types or amounts of leave)?
  - When do they become eligible, and under what employment conditions?
  - How are these policies communicated with employees?
2. How do our organizational policies align with and differ from the WRN Paid Family and Medical Leave Standard?
3. What current organizational practices are in place to support family and medical leave, if any? What are those? If none, what are some that should be considered (e.g. lactation support, parental leave planning and coaching, etc.)?
4. Is there a mechanism for our organization to evaluate or receive feedback about our leave policy and support practices?
  - If **yes**, in what ways has that feedback encouraged the organization to evaluate its policy and support practices? Is that evaluation structured and ongoing?
  - If **no**, what may that look like? (A periodic/seasonal employee survey? The implementation of a system of feedback between supervisors and employees with an equity lens?)



## Video #2 Discussion

## Mythbusting and How to Fund Paid Leave

(Video length 7:43; Total activity time ~ 20 mins)

1. What are the potential long-term benefits to our community of implementing the WRN Standard? How can we shine a spotlight on those benefits for our stakeholders?
2. How can we reconcile or balance the finances of our organization with the clear benefits of implementing robust paid leave?
3. Compile a list of potential sources for funding paid family and medical leave. Keep in mind, there may be funding sources that your community has access to not covered in the video. Of this list, which 2-3 options make the most sense for your organization to explore as first steps? For each option, write a few sentences why.

## Additional Questions to Consider


(Total activity time ~15 mins)

1. What steps do we need to take to ensure our leave policies and practices are clear, fair, and accessible?
  - What options exist outside the annual budget?
2. How can our community effectively budget to incorporate paid family and medical leave and any other support services we might want to include?
  - What options exist outside the annual budget?
3. How can we utilize the WRN Paid Family and Medical Leave resources in our policy development? In our employee handbooks? In our contracts?
4. What are the first (and next) actionable steps we can take toward reviewing or implementing these policies?



## Preparing for Action

## Taking Action: After Today's Meeting



Policy is the essential first step, but culture change around paid leave is needed to create true equity. Thank you for starting the conversation.

- ❑ Gather the data that you compiled in this discussion for distribution to all stakeholders.
- ❑ Schedule follow-up meeting(s) to discuss progress. These meetings may do the following:
  - Assign a committee or individual to review the WRN resources in detail.
  - Create measurable goals with an accompanying timeline for completion.
- ❑ Consider collaborating with other organizations to learn from their experiences.
- ❑ Plan community outreach to inform your broader community about changes and solicit feedback.
- ❑ Don't forget to celebrate your commitment to equity and your employees!
- ❑ Share your wins and challenges with WRN so we can continue to improve support of Jewish organizations more broadly.

## Response Sheets

Use these pages (or make your own) to record responses and for action planning. It may be helpful to assign a notetaker who can present these results back to the group and other stakeholders.

### *Video #1: WHAT is Paid Family and Medical Leave and WHY You Should Care*

<p>1. What is our current organizational policy for family and medical leave?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How much time for leave do we give?</li> <li>● Do we have paid or unpaid leave (or a combination of both)?</li> <li>● Who is eligible (and for what types or amounts of leave)?</li> <li>● When do they become eligible, and under what employment conditions?</li> <li>● How are these policies communicated with employees?</li> </ul>	
<p>2. How do our organizational policies align with and differ from the WRN Paid Family and Medical Leave Standard?</p>	
<p>3. What current organizational practices are in place to support family and medical leave, if any? What are those? If none, what are some that should be considered (e.g. lactation support, parental leave planning and coaching, etc.)?</p>	
<p>4. Is there a mechanism for our organization to evaluate or receive feedback about our leave policy and support practices?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If yes, in what ways has that feedback encouraged our organization to evaluate our policy? Is that evaluation structured and ongoing?</li> <li>● If no, what may that look like? (A periodic/seasonal employee survey? The implementation of a system of feedback between supervisors and employees with an equity lens?)</li> </ul>	

**Video #2: Mythbusting and How to Fund Paid Leave**

1. What are the potential long-term benefits to our community of implementing the WRN Standard?
  - How can we shine a spotlight on those benefits for our stakeholders?

2. How can we successfully plan the finances of our organization in order to implement and sustain robust paid leave?

3. Compile a list of potential sources for funding paid family and medical leave. Keep in mind, there may be funding sources that our community has access to not covered in the video. Of this list, which 2-3 options make the most sense for our organization to explore as first steps? For each option, write a few sentences why.



**Preparing for Action: Additional Questions to Consider**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1. What steps do we need to take to ensure our leave policies and practices are clear, fair, and accessible?</p>  |  |
| <p>2. How can our community effectively budget to incorporate paid family and medical leave and any other support services we might want to include?</p>   |  |
| <p>3. How can we utilize the WRN Paid Family and Medical Leave resources in our policy development? In our employee handbooks? In our contracts?</p>   |  |
| <p>4. What are the first (and next) actionable steps we can take toward reviewing or implementing these policies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What additional information do we need? Do we need the support of other stakeholders or experts?</li></ul> |  |

**Consider using this template to support and guide your next steps and action planning.**

Goal	Task	Person Responsible	Conversations or Resources Needed	Target Deadline	Status
<p>1. Gather the data that you compiled in this discussion for distribution to all stakeholders.</p>					
<p>2. Schedule follow-up meeting(s) to discuss progress.</p>					
<p>3. Assign a committee or individual to review the WRN resources in detail.</p>					
<p>4. Create a plan for community outreach to inform the broader community about changes and solicit feedback.</p>					

## Appendix of Biblical Sources

There are numerous examples in Jewish texts that highlight the value of caregiving. Here are a few more examples that demonstrate how our tradition's esteemed biblical matriarchs and patriarchs embodied this value:

Ruth 4:15-16

וְהָיָה לְךָ לְמֵשִׁיב נָפֶשׁ וּלְכֹלֶל אֶת־שִׁבְתְּךָ כִּי כָלְתָךְ אֲשֶׁר־אֶהְיֶה יִלְדְּתוּ אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לְךָ מִשִּׁבְעָה בָנִים:

He will renew your life and sustain your old age; for he is born of your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons.

וַתִּקַּח נְעָמִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וַתְּשִׂתֵּהוּ בְחִיקָהּ וַתְּהִי־לּוֹ לְאִמָּת:

Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became its foster mother.

The Ruth and Naomi narrative is one that underscores the importance of intergenerational familial support in times of acute life transitions. As both matriarchs work together to form new lives in the midst of immediate loss, they demonstrate that caregiving is essential to the survival of their new family unit. Ruth, physically able to work in the fields, provides economic sustenance as their family faces financial fragility. After Ruth marries and bears a child, we learn in Ruth 4:16 that "Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became its foster mother." In their respective abilities to reciprocate care for each other, they illustrate that caregiving is embedded as a value in Jewish tradition and text.

Genesis 44:22

וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֲדֹנָי לֹא־יִוָּבֵל הַנֶּעַר לְעֶזְבֹּת אֶת־אָבִיו וְעֶזְבֹּת אֶת־אָבִיו וָמָת:

We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he were to leave him, his father would die.'

In this verse from Genesis, we learn of Jacob's deep love for, and emotional reliance upon, his youngest son, Benjamin. As famine descends upon the land, Jacob's sons journey to Egypt to seek sustenance for their family. Jacob's reluctance towards allowing Benjamin to leave him offers insight to the value of caregiving from the perspective of one in most need of care. Indeed, Jacob pleads with his sons to care for Benjamin, and compares the possibility of losing him as one akin to death. It is in this verse that we may understand caregiving as a Jewish value most poignantly, from a biblical figure able to articulate his own need for a family member to accompany him as he approaches the end of his life.

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