

Paid family leave improves vaccination rates in infants

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Parents who take paid family leave after the birth of a newborn are more likely to have their child vaccinated on time compared to those who do not, according to new research from Binghamton University, State University of New York. The effect is stronger on families living below the poverty line.

"Currently, many people do not vaccinate their child within the recommended schedule and are late," said Solomon Polachek, professor of economics at Binghamton University. "Often this might be due to parental time constraints. When an infant is really young, these immunizations are critical, since infants are at a higher risk of infection and illness if not vaccinated properly."

In 2004, California was the first state to implement a Paid Family Leave (PFL) [policy](#), allowing private-sector employees up to six weeks of leave with partial wage replacement to care for a newborn baby. This time not only helps parents settle into their new caregiving roles, but it also allows them time to make vital parental decisions, such as ensuring their child is vaccinated on time.

Binghamton University Ph.D. student Agnitra Roy Choudhury, who conducted this study under Polachek's direction, looked at the National Immunization Survey to collect data regarding child vaccination rates between 19-35 months old. Specifically, the researchers looked at children born before and after the PFL policy was implemented in California and whether children received vaccinations on time compared

to children in other states during the same time period. Vaccinations studied include Hepatitis-B (HepB), Diphtheria Tetanus Pertusis (DTP) and Haemophilus Influenza Type B (HIB).

They found that the PFL policy in California granting six weeks of [family](#) leave with partial wage replacement reduced late vaccination rates in infants.

"The research finds that paid family leave (at least in California) increases the chance an infant will be inoculated for the second HepB injection by over 5 percent relative to states not implementing paid family leave, and for the DTP injection by about 1.5 percent," said Polachek. "The effects are bigger for poorer families, who are less likely to have access to paid family leave from their jobs alone."

According to Polachek, vaccinating [infants](#) on time is vital to their future health and well-being, since vaccines can ward off diseases that can impact future attendance at school. Not only do these outcomes lead to less learning for children, but also they can lead to lower earnings power.

"Poor school attendance and less early childhood learning can have consequences regarding the widening earnings distribution," said Polachek. "Paid [family leave](#) might be a viable national policy if it mitigates these detrimental effects."

Future research will focus on using more precise survey data and analyzing other states, such as New York, that have recently implemented PFL policies.

The paper, "The Impact of Paid Family Leave on the Timing of Infant Vaccinations," was published in *IZA Institute of Labor Economics*.

Provided by Binghamton University

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