

Ultimate Checklist for Managers

Maven's guide for supporting and empowering working parents before, during, and after leave



Your managers are key to creating a more supportive workplace for parents

The percentage of women in the American workforce has been falling for the last 20 years.¹ Why? In one recent poll, 61% of women said family responsibilities were the main reason they weren't working.² And while 74% of moms say they "love their careers",³ 43% leave their job within one year of having a baby.⁴ To retain more women and reduce high turnover costs, leading employers are recognizing the importance of creating family-friendly workplaces.

Global employers have taken commendable steps to offer benefits that demonstrate their commitment to families: increasing paid parental leave policies, implementing policies that are equitable across diverse paths to parenthood, and offering adoption coverage or egg freezing benefits. In fact, 44% of large U.S. employers now offer fertility benefits.⁵

Yet shifting office culture often lags behind company policy, meaning parents lack the support they need on a daily basis at work from their managers, colleagues, and HR. The latest numbers reveal that despite leaps in paid leave policies, only 11% of companies offer supportive programs for parents re-entering the workforce.⁶

Beyond return-to-work support, there is widespread evidence proving bias against mothers is a systemic problem: mothers are viewed as less competent and less

committed to their jobs⁷ (though that myth has been debunked time and again⁸) and face a lack of professional advancement termed the “maternal wall”.⁹ As a result, 42% of women worry that growing their family will hurt their career.¹⁰

How can you help prevent biases and make sure that your employees feel supported and empowered as they become parents? Maven’s comprehensive family benefits sit at the intersection of parenthood and career. We know firsthand from our experience with employees and employers that training managers is a critical piece of any workplace family benefits program. As one recent example: we conducted a survey at a global business consulting firm that had just implemented Maven’s comprehensive family benefits but hadn’t yet equipped managers with training, which revealed that 67% of managers did not have adequate knowledge of resources to address the needs of new or expecting parents who are their direct reports.

Maven’s Checklist for Managers is a comprehensive playbook that equips your managers with every step they need to take to support parents before, during, and after leave.

Provide copies of this checklist to your managers and encourage them to use it as an easy-to-follow guide when their direct reports share the news they are becoming parents.

By equipping leaders at your company with the proper training and tools, beginning with Maven’s Checklist for Managers, you will drive employee satisfaction and productivity, and, ultimately, increase retention by creating a more supportive and empowering environment for working parents.

MAVEN'S ULTIMATE CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS

Your go-to guide for supporting employees before, during, and after parental leave

As a manager, you play a critical role in supporting your employees in the challenging and exciting transition to parenthood. This checklist is your go-to resource, full of everything you need to empower new and expecting parents on your team throughout their journey—and ensure a positive experience for all. In this checklist, we'll refer to your direct report as “your colleague”. If you're unsure about how to handle something, talk to your HR partner for their expert guidance.

Upon first hearing the news

- Congratulate and listen**
How you respond to the news that your colleague is expecting is absolutely critical. Offer your congratulations! Listen to your employee and ask questions about how you can best support them through this transition.
- Direct them to HR**
Encourage your colleague to review company-provided benefits materials, join internal resource groups, and speak directly with HR to get a detailed, up-to-date overview of what resources are available to them.
- Communicate**
Have your colleague send you a communications plan for how they would like to announce their news, and offer your assistance. Create space for them to make the announcement to the team and organization. (Remember: it's their news to share, so follow their wishes!)
- Define timeline and leave plan**
Work with your colleague and HR to set leave dates and outline your colleague's proposed return to work, plus any flexibility or other needs prior to leave.

Three months before leave: Prep period

- Develop coverage plan**
Work with your colleague to prepare a detailed list of key projects and tasks as a coverage plan (based on overall team priorities).
- Outline responsibilities with team**
Set up a team meeting to clearly outline and communicate the coverage plan, including who will take on key tasks and projects.
- Ensure smooth handoffs**
Have your colleague prepare written guides, introduce external vendors, and have one-on-one training meetings, as needed, with anyone taking on portions of their work. Allow time for smooth handoffs to happen, encourage documentation to avoid unanswered questions, and lend support when asked.
- Prep communications plan**
Work with your colleague to define how they would like to be communicated with and kept updated on any important internal news or ongoings while on leave, in order to set clear expectations. Share the plan with HR.

One month before leave: Transition period

- Embed flexibility for leave**
Agree to a clear start date of leave (unless baby arrives early, of course!), put it on the team calendar, and discuss your colleague's needs for flexibility or remote working (dependent on company policies).
- Preview upcoming strategic plan**
Meet with your colleague to walk through your team's strategic plan and calendar, and share any guidance or insights for upcoming months from company leadership to provide transparency in advance of their leave. Create space for your colleague to ask questions.
- Discuss professional goals**
Based on your colleague's wishes, offer the opportunity to have a performance review to highlight their successes and learnings since their last review process, and to reiterate their career goals at the company before leave.

During leave

- Offer congratulations**
Send a congratulatory note when baby arrives. Ask their permission to share the news with the full team.
- Follow colleague's preferred communications plan**
Check in based on their wishes and via your agreed-upon outreach method.
- Be proactive**
Reach out directly with any major news or announcements that will be made external or new hiring plans/internal restructurings that directly impact your colleague.
- Employ the 2/3rds rule**
Touch base two-thirds of the way through leave to determine your colleague's return-to-work date, as well as define their flexible work schedule.

One month prior to return

- Check workspace setup**
Work with HR to prep lactation room(s) if needed, and to ensure your colleague's desk, IT needs, office supplies, and any belongings are prepared in their designated workspace.
- Suggest check-in call**
If your colleague wishes, two weeks prior to return, have a 30-minute check-in call to share any key team updates, preview your colleague's key projects and goals for their first month back, and share a calendar of any planned all-staff or team events.
- Connect with HR**
Connect your colleague with HR directly to plan for in-office needs, as well as to reserve time via shared calendar for lactation room(s) if pumping.
- Prepare welcome**
Make team plans for a welcome back card or lunch for your colleague's warm welcome, aligned with company policies.

The return

- Set the tone**
Send an email reminding colleagues to check in with your colleague on their first day back, to respect their calendar, and to make them feel welcome.
- Catch them up**
Hold a 30-minute meeting with your colleague to check in, share internal updates, and answer their questions or concerns.
- Check in**
Touch base regularly to ensure the transition schedule and plan is working and ask about your colleague's needs.

Endnotes

1. Toosi, Mitra. "A Look at the Future of the U.S. Labor Force to 2060". U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. September 2016.
2. Hamel, Liz et al. "Kaiser Family Foundation/New York Times/CBS News Non-Employed Poll". Kaiser Family Foundation. December 2014.
3. "Modern Family Index 2018". Bright Horizons Family Solutions. January 2019.
4. "Women in the Workforce - United States: Quick Take". Catalyst. June 2019.
5. National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans 2018. Mercer. December 2018.
6. 2018 Employee Benefits Survey. Society for Human Resource Management. March 2019.
7. See endnote 3.
8. Correll, Shelley J. et al. "Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty?" American Journal of Sociology. 2007.
9. Verniers C and Vala J. "Justifying gender discrimination in the workplace: The mediating role of motherhood myths". PLoS ONE. 2018.
10. See endnote 3.

This report is published by Maven

Maven is the leading women's and family healthcare company providing end-to-end coverage for all paths to parenthood, including fertility, maternity, adoption, surrogacy, return-to-work, breast milk shipping, and early pediatrics. Maven partners with employers and health plans to improve maternal outcomes, lower costs, and attract and retain more parents in the workforce.



Ready to partner with the company that pioneered return-to-work support?

Talk to Maven about comprehensive family benefits and manager training customized for your company. Reach out to sales@mavenclinic.com or visit mavenclinic.com to learn more.