

The Future of Work and Health: Families and Children

On May 14, 2019, 60 Chicagoans of the public health community came together at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health for “On The Table” conversations around the Future of Work in Chicago. Participants composed memos on the Future of Work to Mayor Lightfoot to let her know what issues we want her to prioritize for action.

Describe the Topic: Families and Children

Neighborhoods/Communities of Focus: All neighborhoods

Who was at the table: Arden Handler, UIC School of Public Health; Cindy San Miguel, UIC School of Public Health; Alexis Bailey, UIC School of Public Health; Alyson Lofthouse, UIC School of Public Health; Carmen Garcia, Ounce of Prevention; Jennifer Vidis, Chicago Department of Public Health; Kathy Waligora, EverThrive Illinois; Keisa Reynolds, UIC Women's Leadership and Resource Center; Kingsley Weaver, Chicago Department of Public Health; Kisha Jones, Cook County Office of the Public Guardian; Lubia Nunez-Montelongo, UIC School of Public Health; Sharmili Majmudar, Women Employed.

Views and opinions represented in this document are those of individuals not the organizations.

What about the topic or issue should be a priority for the mayor?

As defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), the social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, contexts that are manufactured by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national, and local levels. Key factors responsible for producing health inequities within these circumstances and for shaping social stratification include employment and working conditions. Inequalities in health derived from one's work environment are intimately tied to other forms of social inequities such as differences in economic stability, educational attainment, insurance coverage, conditions of the physical environment, and food security all of which have compounding impacts on health outcomes. Consequently, regulating employment conditions and implementing progressive policies will not only redistribute resources more equitably, but also influence the life experiences of varying social groups to include more opportunities for wellbeing, reduce exposure to environmental stressors leading to disease, and expand access to health care. We believe it is time to advance smarter and more expansive policies that support working families and create a sturdier foundation for a healthier Chicago.

Overview of Key Issues:

1. **Fair Scheduling:** According to Women Employed, millions of workers across the country suffer from unstable & unpredictable schedules. This phenomenon of unfair scheduling is particularly evident in low-paid jobs where women represent about two-thirds of workers. Notably, it is women - and particularly women of color - who are impacted most by the personal & familial compromises an unpredictable work schedule burdens a worker with (Women Employed¹, n.d.).
2. **Paid Family and Medical Leave:** At a national level, the U.S. has no federal **paid** family leave (PFL) legislation. The 1993 Family Medical Leave Act provides unpaid leave, but only about 60% of private-sector workers are eligible, and of those, 46% report struggling to afford unpaid time off (Rossin-Slater and Uniat, 2019).
3. **Paid Sick Leave** As of 2017, both the city of Chicago and Cook County approved separate ordinances, which ensured that workers could earn paid sick days to use if they or a family member falls ill. This is an essential benefit that prevents individuals from having to choose between their paycheck and their health. It is also important that both ordinances have a broad "family member" definition in order to account for a variety of family constructions and avoid potential exclusions (Women Employed, Sicktime.org, n.d.).

4. **Lactation Policies:** Breastfeeding is vital for the health of mothers and infants. The standard recommendation is that babies receive only breastmilk during the first 6 months of life and continue to be breastfed for at least their first year. Thus, breastfeeding employees require reasonable length breaks throughout the workday in order to express their milk. This biological function happens naturally, and breastfeeding individuals will need to pump about every three hours. Employers need to follow IL state laws for the provision of a clean and private lactation room set up with proper fixtures in order to fully accommodate this natural and beneficial process.
5. **Support for Implementation of Family Friendly Work Policies:** These work-related policies and provisions are not able to be fully implemented unless employers and employees are aware of their existence and understand both their rights and obligations. Employers need assistance in understanding and implementing the laws and workers need information in understandable language about their rights and protections in place to support their rights to a healthy workplace.

Overview of Work-Related Policies and Programs:

Federal Level	State Level	County and City Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA)</u>: requires employers of 50+ employees to provide up to 12 weeks of <u>unpaid</u>, job-protected leave to eligible employees for the birth or adoption of a child or for the serious illness of the employee or a spouse, child, or parent. • <u>Minimum wage</u>: the federal minimum wage is currently \$7.25 per hour for covered nonexempt employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Minimum wage</u>: In Illinois, the minimum wage is \$8.25 per hour. • <u>Paid Family Leave (PFL)</u>: 6 states & the District of Columbia have passed Paid Family Leave policies. • <u>Healthy Workplace Act</u>: a bill that is working its way through the IL Statehouse that would require all employers to give every employee a week’s worth of paid sick days. This Act is aimed at part-time or low-wage earning employees. The bill has passed through the IL Senate three separate times but has stalled in the House each time. It is currently (May 2019) awaiting a House vote. • <u>Illinois Pregnancy Accommodation Law</u>: applies to every employer in the state with 1+ employees, requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for a pregnant employee & grant leave. • <u>IL Breastfeeding Law</u>: 2018 law provides expanded protections for employees needing to express milk in the workplace. Notably, the provided break time necessary for lactation may not reduce the worker’s compensation and is only allotted for a minimum of one year after the child’s birth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Chicago Office of Labor Standards</u>: will include a staff of five to address employee complaints, investigate ordinance violations, and oversee and enforce employment laws for the city of Chicago. • <u>Paid Sick Leave (PSL)</u>: Illinois does not currently have a statewide law that requires private employers to provide employees with PSL; however, the city of Chicago enacted a law effective 2017 that requires employers to provide employees with paid sick leave.

What are the suggestions from the conversation for Chicago's new mayor to consider?

Chicago as a model employer: the city of Chicago is in a unique position to demonstrate and set the course for work-related policies that effectively support families and children. As a prominent employer as well as a governing body, Chicago can hold itself to a higher standard and model initiatives that more fully support workers and their families who interact with its system of public services. Modeling better family friendly policies will allow the city to act as a key influence affecting changes in employment relations and conditions in other sectors. The subsequent outcomes of these changes will be increased wellbeing, growth in job security, a strengthening of regulatory protections, and improved health outcomes.

Actions we believe should be prioritized within Mayor Lightfoot's first 100 days in order benefit working families and their children in Chicago include:

- I. Development and implementation of an expansive and enforceable lactation policy for the city of Chicago
- II. Staffing and funding of the Chicago Office of Labor Standards
- III. Appointment of a Deputy Mayor of Families and Children
- IV. Support of the Fair Workweek Ordinance

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