



Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave

It's Time to Bond PFML Uptake Initiative
Outcomes and Learnings



It's Time to Bond PFML Uptake Initiative

Report Overview

In 2020, Washington State became the first state to introduce a new paid state leave program that was separate from a short-term disability program. The Washington law expands eligibility and provides one of the longest leaves and among the top wage replacements programs among implementing states. Though a groundbreaking policy for families, the Washington program had implementation pain points that would replicate systemic barriers to access that families experienced in previous implementation states including California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. Experience from the states that implemented the program before Washington portend that without concerted efforts, families furthest from equity (e.g., immigrants, people with limited English proficiency, those in lower wage jobs) will face real and perceived barriers to understanding and using the program that they pay into.

To promote the launch and a more equitable uptake of PFML in the state among workers who have historically lacked access to paid family leave programs, Perigee Fund made complementary investments between 2020 and 2023 supporting outreach and enrollment grants to over two dozen community-based organizations in Pierce and Yakima Counties, social media campaigns in Pierce and Yakima counties, health care provider outreach and education, policy advocacy, and data analysis and evaluation.

This report describes these complementary investments and the impact of community outreach, policy advocacy, and public-philanthropic partnerships.

Key Takeaways

1. Community outreach and enrollment assistance are vital in reaching those furthest from equity. Awareness among groups with the lowest utilization continues to be a challenge and a priority for advocates in Washington. An important lesson from early adopting states is that dedicated funding from state programs for outreach and education are important for program uptake and that outreach efforts need to be ongoing, not just at program launch.

2. Policy advocacy has a crucial role to play. Advocates have been critical in advancing support of a permanent, universal paid leave benefit. There have been minor changes to the law since 2020, which include an expanded definition of family, changes in hour requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensuring equitable changes are still at the forefront of the policy despite program solvency challenges. In addition, state advocates have connected and shared experiences with other state and national partners.

3. Public-philanthropic partnerships can enhance agency capacity and inform state and national policy. Perigee Fund resourced the state agency administering the paid program and the University of Washington to enable data capacity and to create an evaluation consultation group composed of national researchers, government agencies, and community organizations. The funding helped to position the state program for continuous improvement and exploration of the broader benefits of Washington's PFML program to inform case-making for federal and state policy. The initial partnership was followed by state funding for additional data positions and increased state funding to plan a state-led outreach model.

Perigee Fund Paid Family and Medical Leave Initiative

Background

Paid Family and Medical Leave is crucial to advance economic, gender, and racial equity. It is also an important benefit that reduces major drivers of stress for parents. Pregnant and parenting people need time to recover after pregnancy and birth, care for and bond with a newborn or new child through adoption or fostering, adjust to changing family dynamics, and receive postpartum and well-child medical care. Having paid time off to focus on the physical, mental, and emotional health of babies and parents is vital to promote healthy attachment, which research shows is foundational to is foundational to children's long-term mental health.

Research also shows that the length of paid leave matters for both maternal and infant mental health. Paid leave for less than eight weeks has been linked to a reduction in overall health status and increased depression; whereas paid leave for 12 or more weeks increases infant immunization uptake, decreases hospitalizations, and decreases rates of postpartum depression.

Reducing parental stress is a meaningful way to support healthy early parent-child relationships. Perigee Fund operationalizes the reduction of parental stress, particularly for parents affected by poverty, adversity, and racism, as supporting parents with more time and more money. Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML) does just that. Our aim is to ensure that all eligible working parents and primary caregivers have the time and income to bond with their babies while reaping the benefits to their own health and well-being.

Perigee Fund made a multiyear commitment to enhancing the rollout of Washington's PFML program for several mission-aligned reasons:

Time to Bond

Bonding leave (commonly referred to as maternity leave, family leave, parental leave) enables new parents and primary caregivers to bond with babies during their critical first months. Bonding, attachment, and attuned early relationships are the building blocks of future social relationships, health, and learning.

Physical and Mental Health

Birthing parents need time for their bodies to recover from delivery and to get treatment for health issues such as postpartum depression, which is the most common pregnancy complication. In some cases, newborns have health needs (e.g., extended NICU stays, feeding issues, developmental delays), and PFML supports families in being there for that care. Additionally, PFML supports other health factors like breastfeeding and immunizations.

Fathers/ Non-Birthing Parent Inclusion

Washington's PFML is available to fathers and non-birthing parents who have historically not had access to paid leave or have experienced pressures to return to work more quickly. Societal norms around fathers taking leave are starting to shift with a long way still to go. Bonding is just as important and beneficial for non-birthing caregivers and babies.

Economic Security

Before PFML, the reality of needing a paycheck drove countless birthing and non-birthing parents back to work before they and their babies were ready. The

federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) has provided the most well-known pathway to taking caregiving leave, but FMLA provides time without income and has not been available to many workers. Washington's PFML provides time and income and is structured to enable lower-income workers to maintain a high percentage of their wages.

Childcare

Infant care is unaffordable for many families, and infant slots in quality childcare sites have long waiting lists. PMFL is a tool that gives families greater flexibility to delay and shorten the need for costly infant care (e.g., if a single mother returns to work after 12 weeks instead of two weeks or if two parents can both take and stagger their leave).

Equity

Washington's State's PFML policy makes paid leave more accessible to groups who have historically not had access to such a benefit (see below). While PFML has the potential to improve equity, experience from the five states that went before Washington shows that financial concerns, less supportive employers, cultural norms, lack of job protection, language barriers, challenges navigating system complexity, and distrust of government authorities remain barriers to navigate around.

It's Time to Bond PMFL Initiative (2020-2023)

Data from the early adopting states highlighted that while passing paid leave legislation is a critical first step, ensuring equitable implementation is key for uptake. Common themes to address equitable implementation include:

1. Clear and plain language in the application and materials
2. Job protection
3. Engagement of employers in outreach efforts

4. Cultural change normalizing leave and caregiving
5. Better wage replacement
6. Eligibility regardless of immigration status
7. Effective use of data
8. Easy application process

To support implementation challenges highlighted in the other states, trusted community organizations received outreach and enrollment grants through the "It's Time to Bond" initiative. The initiative prioritizes groups for whom paid family leave has historically been inaccessible or underused and ensures families are at the forefront of advocacy and have a stake in how policies are formed.

The goals of the initiative were:

- Increase capacity of trusted community organizations to engage in outreach
- Increase community awareness and understanding of PFML, particularly bonding benefits
- Support use of PFML among groups that have had historically low access or use
- Begin to shift norms around PFML use (e.g., fathers)
- Enable parents and caregivers to spend time with their babies during a critical developmental timeframe
- Capture lessons that can be shared with advocates and policy leaders

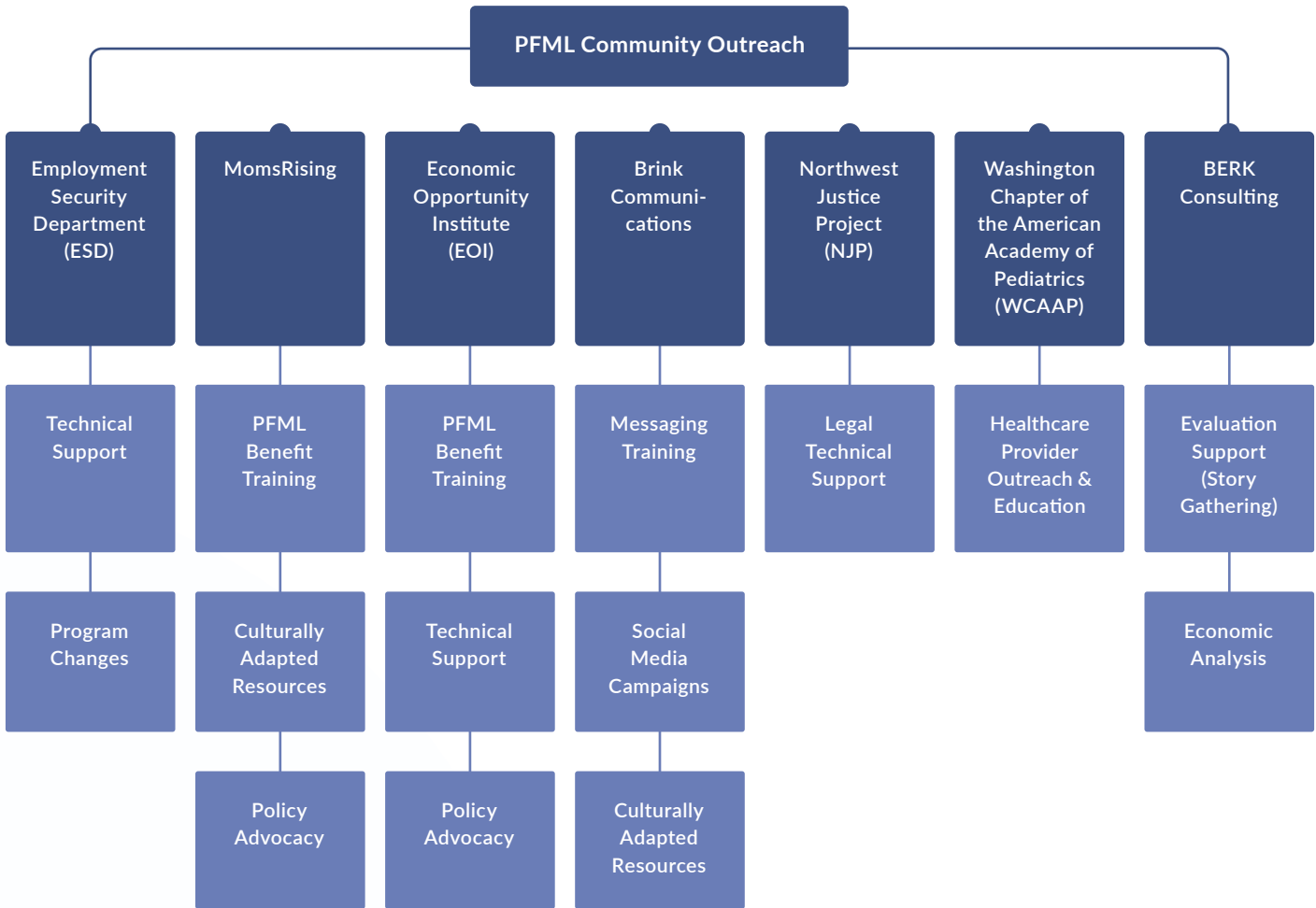
The Power of Partnerships

Establishing partnerships between community organizations, policy advocates and the Employment Security Department (the state agency that administers the program) was key to achieving the initiative’s goals. The initiative focused on getting resources and information directly to communities who are furthest from accessing public benefits, while creating an ecosystem where family voice is central to advocacy for policy and systems change.

The PFML initiative was based in two counties, Pierce County and Yakima County, each with a network of community outreach grantees supported by partner

organizations. Perigee Fund supported a cohort of grantees over three grant years: the first year extended from August 2020 to August 2021, and the second and third years will continue the work through August 2023 with largely the same cohort of grantees and a similar outreach and convening model. The partner organizations outlined in Figure 1 support the community organizations providing outreach and enrollment support, and work together to inform the state agency and the legislature about ways to improve access for families facing the most pressing barriers.

Figure 1. It’s Time to Bond Supporting Partner Organizations.
See Appendix Item 2 for full partner organization descriptions.



Evaluating Impact

The objective of the PFML initiative is to make bonding leave after the birth, adoption, or fostering of a new child more accessible for historically underserved populations. The program's impact is evaluated in three categories: Community-Led Outreach, Policy Advocacy, and Public-Philanthropic Partnerships.

Community-Led Outreach

Data from the early adopting states highlight that while passing paid family and medical leave is a critical first step, lack of awareness about the existence of PFML programs is still a key barrier. This is even more true for groups of workers without access to wage replacement and most in need of a state program. A cohort of organizations in two diverse Washington State counties (one has large farmworker, rural, and native populations; the other has a mix of racially and economically diverse urban, suburban, and military communities) worked to ensure families received linguistically and culturally specific outreach. These organizations served as trusted messengers to help community members directly apply for the program and receive timely payments.

Program Approach and Structure

In each county, a convening organization was chosen to play a leadership role including convening all grantees, providing resources and problem-solving, promoting PFML in the community, and assisting applicants. Each convening organization is also responsible for administering flexible funds to meet the unique needs of its community as they arise. The anticipated level of effort for the convening organization was 20 hours per week, with funding of up to \$100,000 (the third year we increased). In addition to a convening organization, multiple grantee organizations in each county received funds to disseminate information about PFML and assist potential applicants in a way that naturally aligned with their core services and client base. The anticipated level of effort was five hours per week, with funding of up to \$15,000. Grantees could apply as a

collaborative to increase sharing and learning around a specific opportunity or client population.

The grant recipients represented a range of organization sizes, types, and opportunity to connect with potential PFML applicants, as described in Table 1. Perigee Fund solicited renewal applications between the two years and consulted with convening organizations to recommend new partners for Years 2 and 3. Each grant year ran from September through August.



Pierce County PFML grantees and convener organization leaders

In each county, a convening organization was chosen to play a leadership role including convening all grantees, providing resources and problem-solving, promoting PFML in the community, and assisting applicants.

Table 1: Summary of Grantees and Participation

Pierce County		Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3
Asia Pacific Cultural Center (Convenor)	Asian Pacific Community focused nonprofit providing cultural activities, outreach, and youth programs.	●	●	●
South Sound Foster Care Awareness Group <i>Amara (lead agency), Community and Family Services Foundation, Olive Crest, and Catholic Community Services</i>	Collaborative of organizations working with current and potential foster families.	●	●	●
Children's Home Society of Washington	Gig Harbor branch of statewide nonprofit providing support services targeted to families with low incomes and with children ages 0-12.	●	●	●
Communities in Schools, Tacoma	A local chapter of a national model that serves to surround students with a community of support that empowers them to stay in school and achieve at life.			●
Greentrike	Provider of educational play-based programming targeted for families with children 0-5.	●	●	●
Culturally Responsive Integrated & Strength Based Parenting (CRISP) Collaborative <i>Korean Women's Association (lead agency), Answers Counseling, Greater Destiny Church, and Multicultural Child and Family and Hope Center</i>	Collaborative of community organizations serving parents of young children and pregnant women facing significant health disparities, limited English proficiency, and/or significant socioeconomic barriers. (In year 2, Multicultural Child and Family and Hope Center as independent grantee with Recovery Cafe)	●	●	●
Mi Centro	Community-based multiservice organization offering education, immigration, employment, and advocacy services for Latino and Indigenous Native families.			●
Step By Step Family Support Center	Providers of maternity support services, infant case management, and other supportive family services.	●	●	●
Tacoma Community House	Community-based multiservice center offering education, immigration, employment, and advocacy services to immigrants and refugees.	●		
Tacoma Housing Authority	Public housing authority providing client support and empowerment services to low-income housing residents and community members.	●		
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department	Pierce County local public health jurisdiction providing parent, child, and family health programs.	●	●	●
United Way of Pierce County	Operator of the 2-1-1 call center connecting people to local health and human services.	●	●	●
Multicultural Self-Sufficiency Movement	A community based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving the Puget Sound area through programs focused on education, employment, and economic development.		●	

Table Continued

Yakima County		Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3
OIC of Washington (Convenor)	Community Action Agency serving individuals with low incomes, underrepresented individuals, and families in rural Washington.	●	●	●
EPIC Early Learning Programs	Nonprofit organization offering preschool, education, health, nutrition, and family support services to income-eligible families and their children, prenatal to age five.	●	●	●
La Casa Hogar	Family services center offering adult education, pre-school, citizenship education, and legal services.	●	●	●
Nuestra Casa	Immigrant services organization offering English language learning, childcare, and navigation and referrals.	●	●	●
Easterseals Washington	Social and health services provider with early childhood education center operated in cooperation with Yakima Valley College.	●	●	●
People for People	Provider of 2-1-1 information and referral contact center, transportation, employment, and training programs.	●	●	●
Save the Children	Provider of Early Steps to School Success language development and pre-literacy home visiting program for children pre-birth to age five in the Grandview School District.	●	●	
United Way of Central Washington	Funder and community partner for a network of 35 organizations serving families with children ages 0-5.	●	●	
West Valley School District	Public school district offering family engagement programs.	●	●	●
Yakima Neighborhood Health Service	Community health center with seven clinics in Yakima County providing health, maternity support, nutrition, and homeless services.	●	●	●
Asian Pacific Islanders Coalition (APIC)	One of seven chapters in the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Washington (APIC WA) dedicated to promoting equity for Americans of Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander ancestry.		●	●

Media Campaign

The PFML initiative also included a media campaign by Brink Communications called Moments You've Earned. The media campaign hosted the [Moments You've Earned Website](#), which referred interested parties to local grantees for help with application assistance. The Media campaign also included video and radio geolocated ads through Facebook, Instagram, Google, and YouTube.

Media campaign video and ads were offered in Spanish and English. Flyers for the organizations to use in their outreach efforts were created in five different languages to meet the needs of the communities. Over the past two years, over 1,000 people have been connected with local grantees for information and application assistance by way of the media campaign.



Outreach Accomplishments and Impact

Between 2020-2023, the outreach organizations have been trusted messengers promoting, educating, and helping families apply for PFML in their respective languages including Spanish, English, Khmer, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Over the three years, the organizations have grown in knowledge and expertise and have embedded PFML information and outreach into their core services. Year 1 (August 2020-August 2021) was largely considered a learning year, where application assistance did not start

in significant numbers until the first or second quarter of 2021. Not only were grantees learning the details of the state PFML program, but they were also staffing up and learning their various roles within the grant design. Despite the significant learning curve, grantees elevated the most pressing barriers families were facing during the first year of program rollout/implementation. These stories were shared with advocates and brought to the 2021 Washington State Legislative Session, which resulted in meaningful changes such as expansion of the definition of family and the working hour threshold for people impacted by COVID-19 employment changes.

Year 2 (August 2021- August 2022) saw eased COVID-19 restrictions and grantees became more comfortable with their respective roles in the grant, developed internal roles and structures for grant implementation, and gained experience in application assistance. The second year saw several changes from the Employment Security Department in terms of staffing, policy, rules, and new tools that grantees needed to adapt to. Overall, at the end of the second year, the program model seems to have matured and grantees each developed their own way of conducting PFML outreach that worked best for them and their respective communities. In the second year, organizations continued to elevate program and application barriers that families were facing directly with ESD and with policy advocates.

In the third and final year (August 2022-August 2023) the organizations are committed to continue supporting families and working together to create tools that organizations can use to capture what the initiative has done for them over the past three years. These include onboarding toolkits, legal handbooks, and other tools that can support organizations to keep PFML outreach active until ESD implements a state-led outreach program.

In the second year, monthly reports were collected from partners capturing the type of outreach in communities. The monthly report data are disaggregated into three types of outreach:

1. **Application Assistance:** Work directly with an applying family member to ensure their success in the PFML process. May take multiple calls and exchanges, including work with ESD, to follow-up.
2. **Education:** Information is exchanged, questions are answered, and specific PFML scenarios are discussed. Could include live Q&A sessions, phone calls, and in-person chats.

3. **Promotion:** Create broad awareness of the PFML program such as email and newsletter blasts, social media posts, fliers, handouts, and screening.

Exhibit 1 summarizes data collected from grantees over the course of the second year and three months of the third year of the initiative. Not all grantees reported every month, so this underestimates the total effort. An estimated 1,750 applicants were directly assisted, with over 10,000 education interactions and over 80,000 promotion contacts logged.

Exhibit 1. Grantee Monthly Reports (January 2022-December 2022)

How many contacts were made?													
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Pierce County (completed reports)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(7/12)	(3/12)						
▪ Promotion	4,288	3,312	3,817	3,855	3,577	5,766	2,715	2,048	1,629	4,020	16,272	246	51,545
▪ Education	175	214	686	612	678	364	37	273	215	170	254	135	3,813
▪ Application Assistance	146	46	86	128	131	65	1	32	27	37	69	27	795
Yakima County (completed reports)	(10/11)	(10/11)	(8/11)	(9/11)	(9/11)	(9/11)	(3/11)						
▪ Promotion	5,785	6,951	5,394	4,402	5,729	2,553	183	340	3,182	6,799	686	4,190	46,194
▪ Education	626	782	1,090	206	538	1,601	77	128	1,260	1,014	240	396	7,958
▪ Application Assistance	51	71	48	34	102	86	88	64	112	649	84	67	1,456
How many hours were spent?													
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Pierce County (completed reports)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(8/12)	(7/12)	(3/12)						
▪ Promotion	221	284	390	257	346	473	15	145	70	215	435	8	2,858
▪ Education	184	182	298	147	331	124	11	160	32	40	196	8	1,712
▪ Application Assistance	73	113	147	116	149	73	2	39	25	61	102	1	897
Yakima County (completed reports)	(10/11)	(10/11)	(8/11)	(9/11)	(9/11)	(9/11)	(3/11)						
▪ Promotion	142	203	146	116	190	115	83	83	172	181	153	59	1,643
▪ Education	64	77	76	58	119	68	64	24	85	81	100	77	892
▪ Application Assistance	56	81	56	21	103	82	71	66	73	86	72	74	840
Average Time Per Contact													
Promotion (minutes)	2.2	2.8	3.5	2.7	3.5	4.2	2.0	5.7	3.0	2.2	2.1	0.9	2.8
Education (minutes)	18.6	15.6	12.6	15.0	22.2	5.8	39.6	27.6	4.7	6.1	35.9	9.5	13.3
Application Assistance (minutes)	39.0	99.2	90.7	50.8	64.6	61.6	48.9	65.3	42.3	12.8	68.0	47.9	46.3

Outreach Strategies

Grantees implemented a wide variety of outreach strategies throughout the three-year period. Most often these were layered into existing work to capture clients who primarily engage with them for other reasons, or for general family support services, leveraging existing interactions. Examples include:

- Training of all staff, partner organizations, and volunteers with client interactions on promotions and basic education questions
- Adding a PFML question to screening forms and initial intake interviews
- Integrating PFML information in newsletters, social media, and physical resources like baby boxes, diaper distribution/Diaper Bank, and delivered home activity kits
- Discussing PFML in family group settings such as Culturally Responsive Integrated & Strength Based Parenting (CRISP) Collaborative and Play and Learn classes
- Adding a message into the phone system with PFML information for people to listen to before the call is answered.
- Using posters and flyers in a visible and highly trafficked physical location like their



Marisol's Story

“My pregnancy came as a happy but unplanned surprise. It was not until my third medical appointment I found out I was expecting my second child! I was the first at my jobsite to use the benefit so we had to learn together. They helped me connect to the Employment Security Department so I could prepare to apply. I was thankful to learn the new PFML I earned would provide the financial support I needed to take more recovery and bonding time.

I went into labor, nearly a month before my due date. He was born via C-section. He had some difficulty breathing on his own, so we had to stay in the hospital together for almost one month. A few days after we came home, schools and many services began shutting down because of COVID.

I was able to take nearly 6 months off from my job to bond with my baby. A combination of PFML and my work calendar meant I did not return to work until August 1. Not only was I able to heal from my C-section properly, I was able to rest during those first weeks of frequent night time feedings without concern of being tired at work. Being at home made breastfeeding a lot easier too. The time I spent with my baby- both day and night -was such a blessing. We had lots of uninterrupted bonding time as a family. I did not need to rely on others to care for him. I was able to watch him grow so quickly, from a newborn into an active six month old. I witnessed all the early milestones, all while not having to stress as much about finances. I am so thankful for WA PFML. As a home visitor, I share PFML information with parents I serve so they can access the benefit too.”

Wage Replacement for Families

Data and stories from trusted messengers and families in the past three years highlight the complexity of implementing a state program, but also highlight the impact of trusted messengers for families for whom this leave would never be accessible without the local cultural and linguistic support. Local leaders and trusted messengers are now equipped with information and expertise to educate and help families apply for leave to bond with a new baby. The community organizations have also learned to share with families about the critical developmental timeframe and to support fathers to take leave to spend time with their babies. Most importantly, the organizations have been able to share positive stories, as well as stories of families who still lack access due to program barriers.

Over the past three years, Perigee Fund has invested \$3.6 million dollars to support the PFML initiative, with about \$1.8 million dedicated to community outreach efforts. Initial economic analysis curated by BERK Consulting annualized the grantee reported data for promotion, education, and application assistance

and estimated a \$13.27 million wage replacement for families supported by Perigee's outreach work. The estimates were drawn using ESD data. Based on ESD provided data, the average length of leave taken in 2021 was 9.8 weeks in Pierce County and 9.9 weeks in Yakima County. Leaves specific to medical pregnancy tended to be longer at 10.8 weeks and 10.1 weeks. The average weekly benefit for Pierce County is \$842 and \$715 in Yakima County. Multiplying these values results in a total estimated wage replacement benefit per PFML recipient of \$8,285 in Pierce County and \$7,050 in Yakima County.

Applying these averages to grantee reported activities, the total estimated wage replacement associated with grantee work was \$6.24 million in Pierce County and \$7.03 million in Yakima County for a total of \$13.27 million in a one-year period. The conservative lower bound (assuming no applications result from promotion and education activities) is \$4.95 million in Pierce County and \$4.77 million in Yakima County or \$9.72 million total.

Exhibit 2. Wage Replacement Values per County

	Pierce County			Yakima County		
	All	Medical Pregnancy	Family Bonding	All	Medical Pregnancy	Family Bonding
Applications (inferred)	26,282	1,930	10,020	8,476	559	3,055
Denial Rate	19%	15%	15%	20%	15%	15%
Total Customers	22,009	1,678	8,713	7,068	485	2,652
% of All Customers	100%	8%	40%	100%	7%	38%
Total Weekly Claims	216,569	18,062	82,566	69,690	4,901	26,157
Avg Length of Leave	9.8	10.8	9.5	9.9	10.1	9.9
Avg Weekly Benefit	\$842	\$801	\$855	\$715	\$655	\$711
Estimated Benefit Per Customer	\$8,285	\$8,622	\$8,102	\$7,050	\$6,618	\$7,013
Estimated Total Benefit	\$182,350,728	\$14,467,594	\$70,594,329	\$49,828,693	\$3,209,944	\$18,597,485

The total estimated wage replacement associated with grantee work was \$6.24 million in Pierce County and \$7.03 million in Yakima County for a total of \$13.27 million in a one-year period.

ESD State Data Summary Including Pierce and Yakima Counties

The Employment Security Department reports data to the legislature at the end of every calendar year. BERK Consulting analyzed data claims provided by ESD to detect any patterns in outcomes hypothesized to be linked with Perigee Fund’s PFML initiative outreach work. Exhibit 3 and Exhibit 4 show PFML claims in Pierce and Yakima counties from January 2021 through October 2022. The first two exhibits display data for all types of claims. Exhibit 3 displays data from roll out of the state program in January 2020 through June 2022, whereas Exhibit 4 displays data for the second calendar year of program implementation. Exhibits 5 and 6 are filtered for claims related to pregnancy (medical) and

bonding (family). PFML claims have generally trended upward over the period for both counties and statewide. Spikes were seen in the first month of program launch and then again in April 2021, January 2022, and most recently in August of 2022 with the second highest number of claims since program launch. The trend-lines in Pierce and Yakima counties largely track with the overall state trends in total volume of applications. The December 2022 [annual legislative report](#) from ESD noted that Pierce and Yakima Counties are two of the top five counties seeing higher rates of PFML uptake among eligible workers in the state.

Exhibit 3. PFML All
Claims (January
2020- June 2022)

Source: BERK,
2022; ESD, 2022

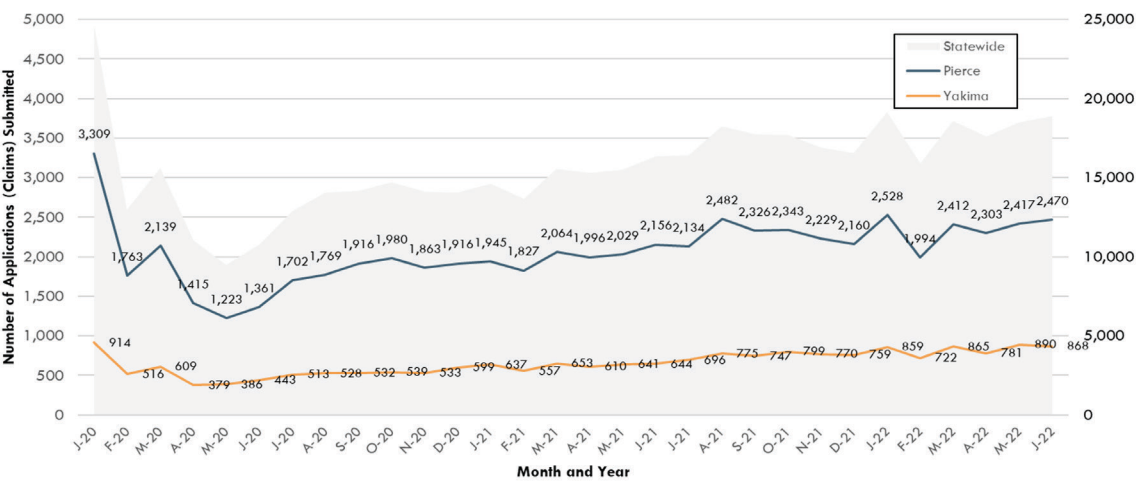


Exhibit 4. PFML
All Claims
(January 2021 -
October 2022)

Source: BERK,
2022; ESD, 2022

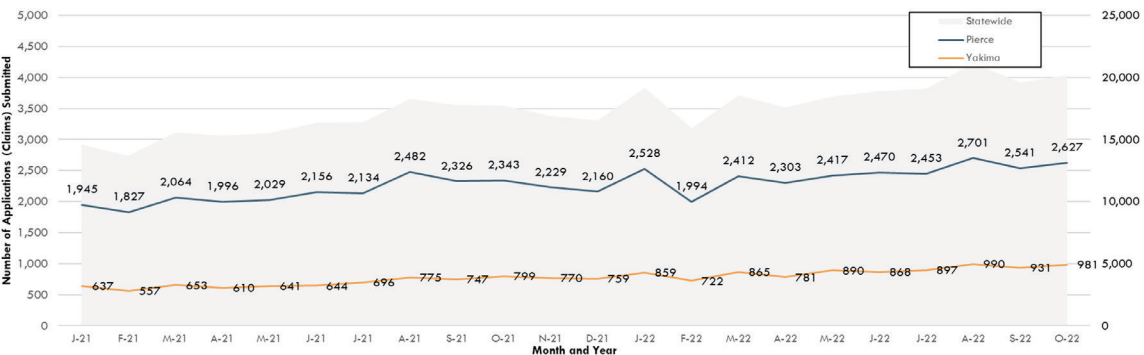


Exhibit 5. Bonding and Pregnancy Claims (January 2020 - June 2022)

Source: BERK, 2022; ESD, 2022

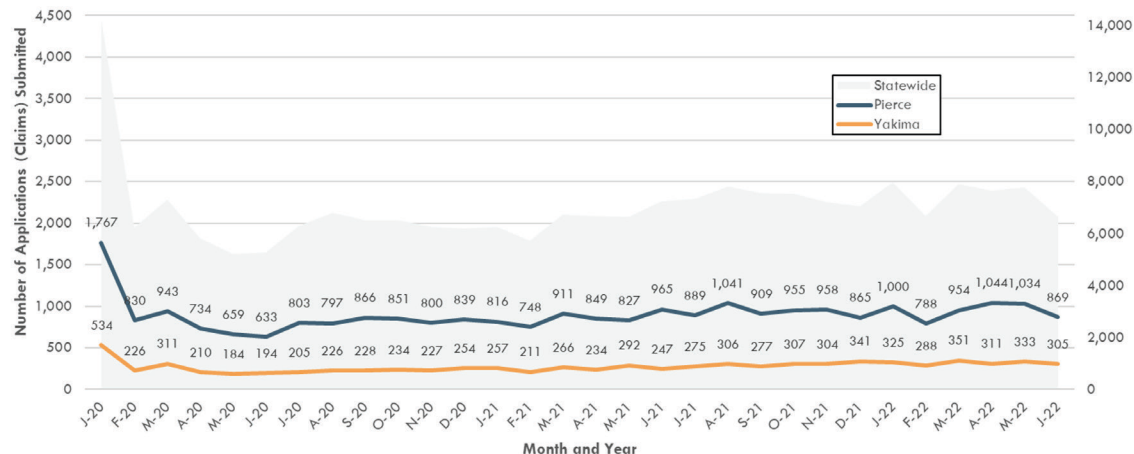
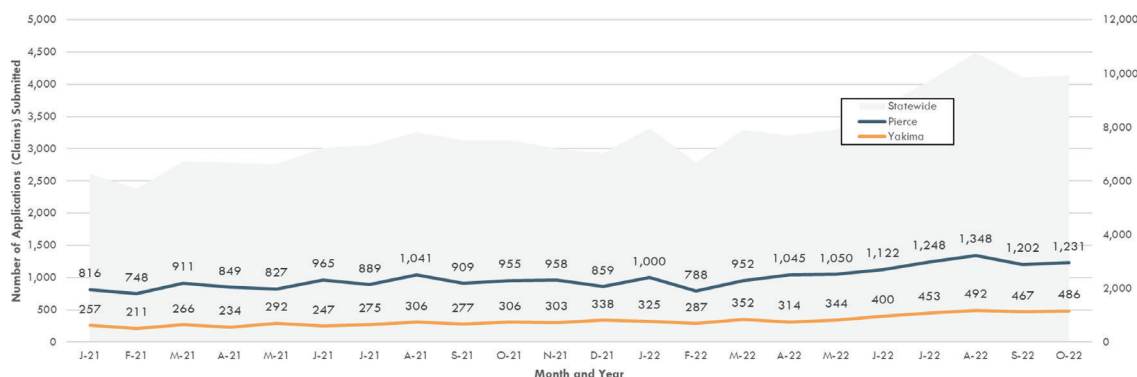


Exhibit 6. Bonding and Pregnancy Claims (January 2021 - October 2022)

Source: BERK, 2022; ESD, 2022



Policy Advocacy

Policy Advocacy was instrumental for the passage of the Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave that was approved in 2017 and began paying benefits in January 2020. Though Washington State's PFML program was the most comprehensive and inclusive in the country in 2020, there were opportunities to provide more awareness about the new program (since outreach had been focused to employers) and for the policy to be more responsive to families' and workers' needs. There was an opportunity to support ongoing advocacy efforts to ensure the new paid leave law was responsive and accessible to all parents and families, especially for groups for whom safety net programs have historically been inaccessible or underused.

Those include and are not limited to:

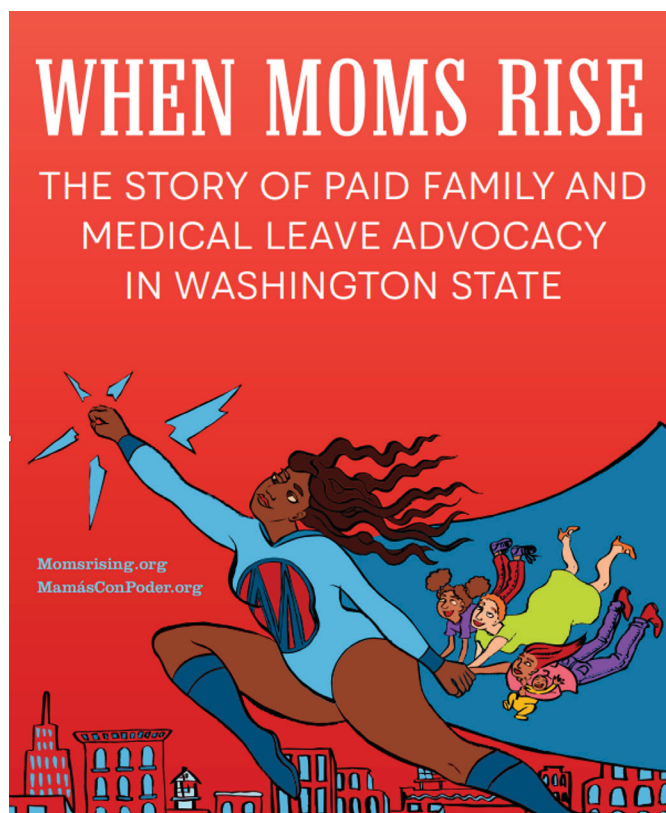
- People of color
- Immigrants and refugees
- People with limited English proficiency or other language barriers
- People with low educational attainment or other literacy barrier
- Low-wage and part time workers who meet eligibility
- People who distrust government or could be targets of law enforcement

Philanthropic funding to support advocates can help create regulations that enhance the effectiveness of paid leave policies. Even the most comprehensive program in the country could benefit from advocacy for policy provisions that eliminate barriers. To support advocates to push for incremental changes to legislation while centering family experiences, Perigee Fund supported the Economic Opportunity Institute and MomsRising.

Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) is a nonprofit policy research and advocacy center based in Seattle with a mission to build an economy that works for everyone. For two decades, EOI has staffed and led the Washington Work and Family Coalition, which developed the campaign and proposal that ultimately resulted in passage of PFML in 2017 led by Marilyn Watkins. In 2019, Perigee Fund partnered with EOI to support their work with community and coalition partners to learn about the kinds of changes that the state program would need to promote equitable outcomes for the well-being of children and families. Through their work they would be part of the state PFML Advisory Committee and elevate family experiences through qualitative data. EOI has also focused on elevating the stories and experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and ensuring ESD is thinking about the ways in which the program would support **BIPOC families**. Between 2020 and the present, EOI (whose policy advocacy is now led by Gabriela Quintana) continues to receive grant funding from Perigee Fund to engage with lawmakers and propose policy improvements based on qualitative and quantitative data, as well as playing a technical support role to outreach grantees in Yakima and Pierce Counties.

MomsRising is a national grassroots advocacy organization founded in 2006 with its main office in Washington State. Since 2007, the organization has worked in coordination with the Washington Work and Family Coalition led by EOI to help pass the 2017 paid family and medical leave program. The MomsRising team led a listening tour throughout Washington State in 2016, visiting over eleven cities throughout the state and building a grassroots movement that lifted the lived experiences of real people and the urgent need

for action to leaders. In 2019, Perigee Fund provided MomsRising with a grant to promote robust and equitable participation in Washington's new Paid Family and Medical Leave program, especially among families with low incomes and families of color. The initial grant supported MomsRising to kickstart the Washington MomsForce Fellowship – an organizing and outreach model building capacity in communities furthest from opportunity. As Fellows, parents and caregivers from key racial, ethnic, and geographic communities participated in a year-long leadership development, outreach, and advocacy program to raise awareness about the importance of paid leave, create culture change to normalize the use of paid leave benefits, and reduce barriers to access. The grant also supported the implementation of a multi-layered outreach and education plan building on best practices and emerging technologies, including: a series of family “play-ins” for new and expectant parents; micro-targeted messaging and engagement to low-propensity voter moms, dads, and caregivers; and earned media outreach, especially in key ethnic media outlets.



Between 2020 and the present, MomsRising continues to receive grant funding from Perigee Fund to engage with lawmakers and propose policy improvements based on qualitative and quantitative data through their role on the ESD PFML Advisory Committee, growing their MomsForce cohorts, as well as playing a technical support role to Perigee's outreach grantees in Yakima and Pierce Counties.

Funding to the Economic Opportunity Institute and MomsRising has resulted in thousands of families having access to information and education about the Washington PFML program. The two policy advocates have provided training and technical support to over 25 community organizations providing community outreach in Pierce and Yakima Counties. Both organizations have provided a structure for feedback from families and community groups that help set the stage for policy changes passed during the first legislative session. These changes include expansion of the definition of families and changing the qualifying threshold for hours worked during the COVID-19 pandemic that allowed thousands of families to have access to the leave despite disruption in employment status.

EOI and MomsRising continue to inform state policy and hold the program accountable for continued changes in how the program is implemented via membership on the ESD PFML advisory committee. Both groups continue to sound the alarm about one of the most pressing barriers to WA's PFML program accessibility, job protection.

Philanthropic-Public Partnerships

In 2020, when Washington's State's PFML program launched, the Economic Security Department had mostly focused on employer outreach and less on community outreach. To help ensure underserved communities equitably benefit from paid time off to bond with new babies, Perigee Fund launched the community outreach initiative in Pierce and Yakima counties. Community outreach is a capacity that, while mandated in statute, had been extremely limited by the Washington Employment Security Department. To support both community outreach in Washington

State and to ensure analytical capacity would focus on administrative data and long-term program evaluation, Perigee funded a grant to ESD. The grant provided additional analytical capacity and supported a subcontract with the University of Washington to launch an evaluation consultation group comprised of national researchers, local government leaders, and community organizations.

The philanthropic-public partnership between Perigee and ESD filled an important capacity gap not funded by the law at program launch in 2020. The grant allowed the ESD team to focus on timely data access and analytics of administrative data to help answer questions including: How does take-up in the program vary by income, language, location, gender, and cultural groups? Amongst many other questions that policy advocates were prioritizing. The grant also included a subcontract to researchers at the University of Washington to analyze pre- and post-policy outcomes using employment, income, and public assistance data that would highlight the impact of the state program helping to provide data for the national conversation around federal PFML.

Each year, ESD submits an annual report to the legislature including utilization data. The additional analytical capacity was critical to ensuring the reporting mandate was met. The additional analytical capacity was recognized as important, so much so that the legislature approved a full-time position following the first year. Since then, the legislature has approved two additional data positions. The grant was instrumental in helping to establish a team focused on timely data analytics that answer to the legislature but who are also communicating the data trends to communities across the state.

Perigee's initial grant to ESD in 2020 overlapped with the community outreach grants. Throughout the three years of the community outreach initiative, ESD played a significant role in helping to train the community organizations about the PFML program. Every year, ESD provided two trainings to the community organizations - one during the Fall and another in the Spring following each legislative session. ESD trained the community organizations to help individuals apply for

the program and learn how to seek support for those who were denied leave. ESD counted this involvement in the initiative as part of their statute requirements. Over the years, ESD was able to get direct feedback from organizations about the ways families were successfully or unsuccessfully able to apply and receive the leave benefits. In 2022, community outreach positions with ESD were approved and are pending legislative approval. These positions, if approved in the 2023 legislative session, would be the first step toward creating community outreach capacity within the agency.

As Perigee structures the third and final year of PFML outreach investments, one goal is for ESD to assume responsibility for community outreach. ESD continues to be interested in developing a community outreach model but requires more data to secure funding from the legislature. To ensure a community-informed outreach program is recommended for state funding, ESD received a Perigee grant to work with the Evans School of Public Policy at the University of Washington. The 18-month grant for \$200,000, matched by ESD with state resources, will support a human-centered design process that will prepare ESD to expand state outreach and technical assistance to improve equitable access to PFML.

The partnership between ESD and UW is the first step towards a state-funded and state-led sustainable community outreach program. ESD's hope is that by partnering with UW to develop the first iteration of a strategic, sustainable, scalable model for their own community partnership program, ESD will be able to accomplish their goals much more quickly, completing substantive planning work by June 2023 and implementing a refined program by summer 2024. This partnership will also allow ESD to establish a network of community organizations and partners statewide, identify existing channels for engaging with partners, and, by the end of the project, to establish a sustainable process for soliciting and integrating partners' feedback into their processes and products.

This partnership will also build on the analytical and evaluative capacity supported in Perigee's first grant to ESD: Through this grant, ESD will develop a comprehensive evaluation plan for the partnership program, including measurements for process improvements; partner and customer engagement; and impacts to equitable access to, and successful participation in, the program for customers from historically marginalized communities and backgrounds by the end of 2023.

Conclusion

Washington has one of the most successful PFML programs in the nation when it comes to bonding leave. Perigee Fund is but one contributor in a massive constellation of players that has sought to build on and learn from the successes and failures of preceding states. And eventually, many more states will seek to learn from Washington as PFML continues to expand. While there is building [philanthropic interest in PFML](#), interest often veers toward policy and evaluation. Just as the state has sustained Perigee's initial investment in PFML data analysis, so too is it the state's duty to invest in equitable community outreach as Perigee exits with a warm handoff. At the end of the day, it is about the families. The trusted community partnerships have demonstrated that outreach and enrollment assistance return real income and precious bonding time to families.

Notes

ⁱThe importance of early bonding on the long-term mental health and resilience of children,
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5330336/>

ⁱⁱPinka Chatterji and Sara Markowitz. “Family Leave After Childbirth and the Mental Health of New Mothers,” The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics, June 2012, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22813939/>

ⁱⁱⁱMaureen Sayres Van Niel, Richa Bhatia, Nicholas S. Riano, Ludmila de Faria, Lisa Catapano- Friedman, et al. “The Impact of Paid Maternity Leave on the Mental and Physical Health of Mothers and Children: A Review of the Literature and Policy Implications,” Harvard Review of - Psychiatry, March-April 2020, doi:10.1097/HRP.0000000000000246

Appendix

Item 1. The following table outlines the states with current and future paid family leave programs, including leave provisions, weekly wage replacement, and maximum length for family leave.

Table: State Family Paid Leave Laws

BERK Consulting (August, 2022) Perigee Fund It's Time to Bond Economic Analysis.

State	Enacted	Eligibility Requirements	Weekly Wage Replacement (depending on state average)	Max Leave (weeks)
California	2004	At least \$300 in wages during base period.	Up to 70%	8
New Jersey	2009	Employees must have had at least 20 calendar weeks of covered New Jersey employment, earning \$172 or more each week or \$8,600 or more in such employment during the base period.	Up to 85%	12
Rhode Island	2014	Paid into the TDI/TCI fund and must have been paid at least \$12,600 in the base period.	Up to 90%	6
New York	2018	Employed by covered employer for at least 26 weeks.	Up to 67%	12
Massachusetts	2019	Earned at least \$4,700 in the last four completed calendar quarters and at least 30 times the weekly unemployment benefit amount that person would be eligible to collect.	Up to 80%	12
District of Columbia	2020	Employee must spend more than 50 percent of work time in the District of Columbia for a covered employer.	Up to 90%	8
Washington	2020	Worked for at least 820 hours in four out of five quarters prior to leave.	Up to 90%	12-18
Connecticut	2021	Earned at least \$2,325 from one or more employers during the highest earning quarter of the base period and have been employed in the previous 12 weeks.	Up to 95%	12
Colorado	2023	Earned at least \$2,500 in wages subject to premiums during the base period.	Up to 90%	12-16
Maryland	2023	Worked at least 680 hours over the 12-month period immediately preceding the date on which leave is to begin.		12
Oregon	2023	During the base year, must have earned at least \$1,000 in wages.	Up to 100%	12-14
Delaware	2025	Employed for at least 12 months by the employer the worker is requesting leave from and must have been employed for at least 1,250 hours.	Up to 80%	12

Item 2. *It's Time to Bond Supporting Partner Organizations.*

The Employment Security Department (ESD)

ESD is the state agency that administers paid family and medical leave in the state of Washington. ESD has partnered with Perigee to provide technical training to the outreach grantees and has received a grant to subcontract with the University of Washington for two projects. The two projects include evaluation support through evaluation capacity and an evaluation consultation group, and a planning grant to recommend a state-led community outreach model.

MomsRising

MomsRising is a national multicultural network that organizes education and advocacy action on the most critical issues facing women, mothers, and families. MomsRising provided introductory training on PFML to grantees. MomsRising is an important advocacy partner in Washington State and is part of the state PFML Advisory Committee.

The Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI)

EOI is a Seattle-based not-for-profit public policy institute working to promote economic security and educational opportunity for all. It was instrumental in the passage of Washington's PFML law. EOI provided initial training on PFML to the grantees and provided technical assistance throughout the three years.

Brink Communications

Brink created local-market media campaigns in Pierce and Yakima counties to promote general awareness of PFML. It also developed a referral website by which online traffic could be directed to the grantee organizations for more follow-up. Visitors to the landing page can submit an online form that sends contact information to a community organization (one of the grantees) of

their choice. The grantee receives an email notification and follows up by sending information about PFML to the submitter.

Northwest Justice Project (NJP)

NJP is a state-based publicly funded legal aid program that provides critical civil legal assistance and representation to low-income people. NJP provides legal training to Perigee's PFML grantees around protections, discrimination, and how PFML interacts with the federal family leave policy.

Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

WCAAP is a network of pediatricians and medical providers advocating for policies that improve the health of Washington State children and families. WCAAP provided outreach and education to healthcare providers in Pierce and Yakima about PFML and supporting families.

BERK Consulting

BERK Consulting is a Seattle-based public policy consulting firm providing evaluation and learning services, including the maintenance of a learning website, interviews, insights, and analysis.

Contributors

Lead Author and Editor

Mariel Mendez, MPH, Associate Program Officer, Perigee Fund

Editors

Flying Crow Creative

Contributing Author

Elizabeth Krause, ScM, Director of Programs, Perigee Fund