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# Better Work, Better Life: Practices and Policies in Jewish Organizations

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Fall 2009

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For Jewish organizations to function at the highest levels, improved work-life policy is essential. Professionals with access to flexible scheduling and generous family leave are more motivated, more productive, and more likely to stay with their organizations.

Women make up nearly three-quarters of the workforce in the Jewish community. While the work-life balancing act stretches across gender, women are affected disproportionately as they still assume two thirds of household and care giving responsibilities. Expanded policies for flexibility and parental leave would lower barriers to women's career advancement and benefit the Jewish organizations where they serve.

Intelligent work life policy also supports the values of the Jewish community, centered on family, learning, culture, care-giving and spirituality. Organizational commitment to such policies will allow women and men to pursue professional excellence and engage fully in Jewish life.

Over the past two decades, the corporate sector has researched and driven change to support work life balance. The nonprofit sector has lagged behind. Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community ("AWP"), an organization focused on career and leadership issues, identified the need for practical information and technical assistance around work-life policy. Accordingly, AWP initiated a national survey in Fall 2008. The resulting report is the first comprehensive analysis of work-life policies in the Jewish community.

In collaboration with JESNA's Berman Center for Research and Evaluation, AWP fielded an online survey to 626 Jewish organizations. The survey was completed by 227 organizations – a 36% response rate, including national and religious institutions, local federations, JCCs and service agencies. The responding organizations range in size from a single employee to 4,200 employees. The Berman Center assisted AWP by designing and fielding the survey, collecting the data and preparing annotated tables for AWP based on the survey data. The tables, analysis and interpretation of the data presented in this report are that of AWP.

Survey results indicate some degree of receptivity to improved work-life practices and policies. However, for most of these organizations, formal policies fall short of what good values and good employment practices demand.

This sample of Jewish organizations displays encouraging results respective to flexibility. "Informal" flexibility is offered to some employees at nearly ninety percent (90%) of the responding organizations. However, only a minority (29%) has formal, written flexibility policies. While informal flexibility does benefit some employees, formal flexibility policy offers consistent access and is more likely to yield broader organizational benefits.

Survey results on maternity leave are less encouraging. Sixty-five percent (65%) of responding organizations offer no paid maternity leave. For the remaining 35% that do provide paid maternity leave, approximately ten percent offer between one and four weeks, and an additional eighteen percent (18%) provide between five and ten weeks. Only 7% of the responding organizations provide twelve weeks or more of paid maternity leave.

Unpaid maternity leave is more common, with nearly half of responding organizations (47%) offering twelve weeks or more. This result derives, in part, from compliance with FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act), the federal mandate that requires organizations with fifty or more employees to offer twelve weeks of unpaid family leave.

The most egregious result in this survey is the 10% of responding organizations that do not provide for maternity leave, paid or unpaid. Generous maternity leave – paid whenever possible and unpaid at the very minimum – should be a celebrated norm in a community which values family and Jewish continuity.

This report concludes with a set of recommendations for specific improvements in work-life policy and practice – to promote employee satisfaction, professional advancement, and organizational effectiveness.

1. **Expanded parental leave policies.** AWP recommends that Jewish organizations formalize and expand their parental leave policies:
  - a. **Paid maternity.** AWP recommends that Jewish organizations aspire toward three months of paid maternity leave.
  - b. **Unpaid maternity leave.** Federal standards mandate that organizations with 50 or more employees offer 12 weeks unpaid maternity leave. For Jewish organizations that choose to offer unpaid leave, AWP recommends the same standard, regardless of size.
  - c. **Parental leave.** AWP values the aspiration to provide equal benefits to all parents and recommends a minimum of one month paid leave for partners.
2. **Formalized, written flexibility policies.** AWP recommends that informal flexibility, already present at many organizations, be formalized through written policies and guidelines for securing these privileges.
3. **Discussion about work-life policy and practice.** Work-life policies have a better chance of success when senior executives, lay leaders, and professional staff collaborate as partners, to build the organizational case.

4. **Work smarter, not harder.** An integrated work-life program calls for a new approach to organizational strategy, goals and functional structures. Work-life policy is an opportunity to focus professional performance on results, rather than “face-time.”
5. **Broad-based communal support.** By publicly supporting intelligent work-life policy, Jewish leaders will send a clear message about the alignment of Jewish values in the Jewish workplace.

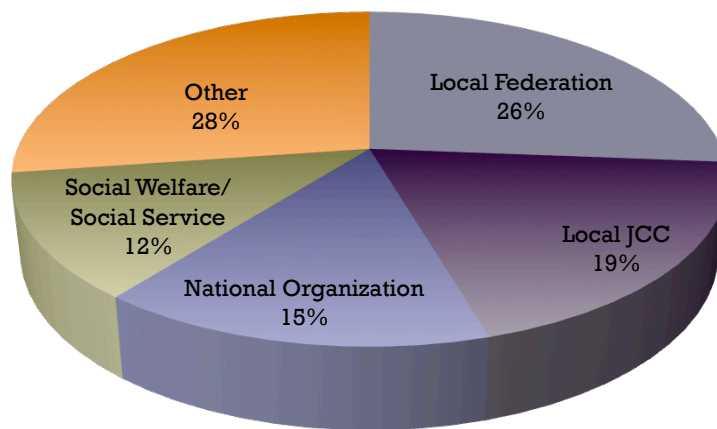
This report marks the first stage of AWP’s Better Work-Life Campaign. Through this effort, AWP seeks to influence Jewish organizations to adopt new approaches to work-life balance and organizational effectiveness. Our goal is to improve work-life policies at 100 Jewish organizations by the end of 2010.

AWP encourages Jewish organizations nationwide, of every size and type, to join our Campaign and become one of the “100.” Participants will have access to AWP consultative support and resources, including the best practices of organizations that responded to this survey. Any Jewish organization that is committed to improved work-life policy is welcome to join AWP’s Better Work Life Campaign by going to our website: [www.advancingwomen.org](http://www.advancingwomen.org) or writing to [info@advancingwomen.org](mailto:info@advancingwomen.org).

**INTRODUCTION**

AWP initiated a national survey in the Fall of 2008, in collaboration with JESNA’s Berman Center for Research and Evaluation. Survey questions focused in particular on flexibility and maternity leave. An online survey was fielded to 626 Jewish organizations and subsequently completed by 227 organizations -- a 36% response rate, including national and religious institutions, local federations, JCCs and service agencies. The responding organizations range in size from a single employee to 4,200 employees. The Berman Center assisted AWP by designing and fielding the survey, collecting the data and preparing annotated tables for AWP based on the survey data. The tables, analysis and interpretation of the data presented in this report are that of AWP.

**Survey Respondents by Organization Type**



**FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility – or Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) – refers to adjustments in the timing or place of work. The types of flexibility included in the survey were flextime, part-time, compressed workweek, telecommuting, compensatory time off, and job-sharing.

Formal flexibility indicates the presence of written policies in the personnel manual. Such policies define eligibility, the parameters of the flexible arrangements, and the procedures for securing, maintaining and evaluating these arrangements. Informal flexibility indicates that, in the absence of formal, written policies, individual employees negotiate flexible work arrangements with their immediate supervisors.

Responding organizations were asked to state whether they offer formal flexibility or informal flexibility and what types of flexibility were offered. For organizations offering formal flexibility, respondents reported the percentage of employees taking advantage of these options.

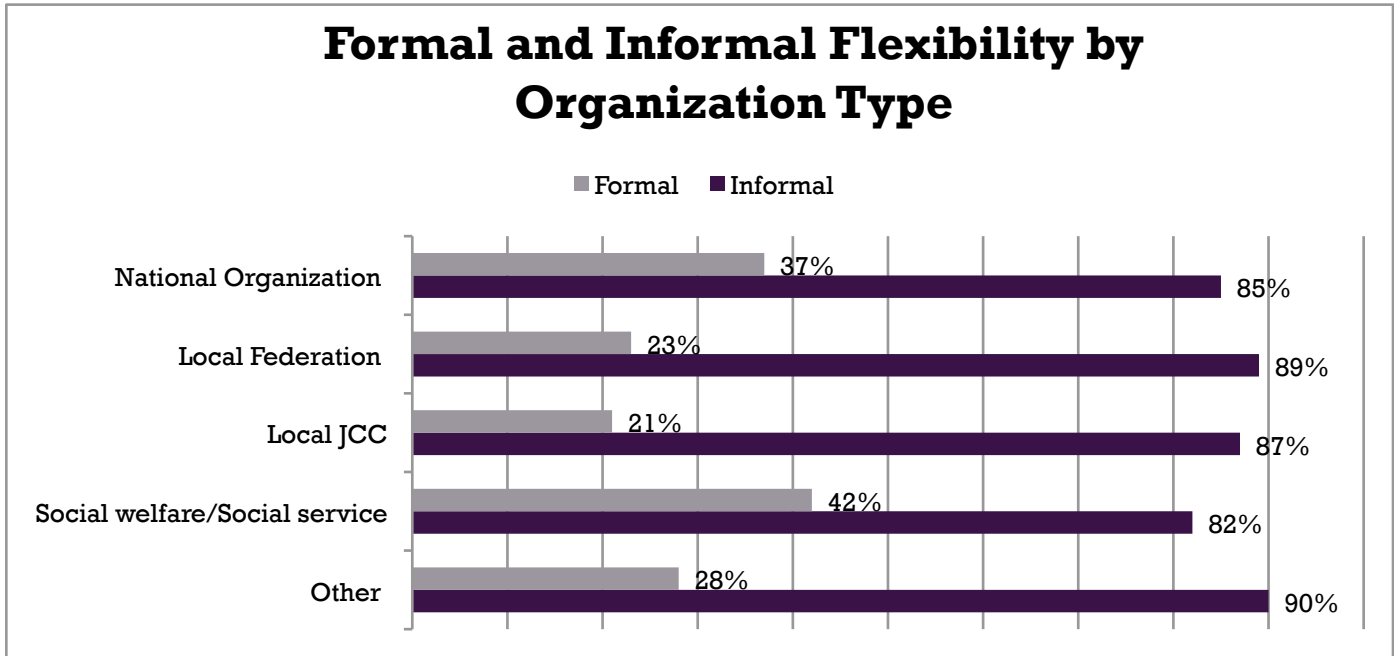


### FINDINGS: Flexibility Policies and Practices

AWP's central finding, for the Jewish communal organizations surveyed, is that formal flexibility is limited and informal flexibility is widespread.

Fewer than one-third of responding Jewish organizations (29%) have formal, written flexibility policies.

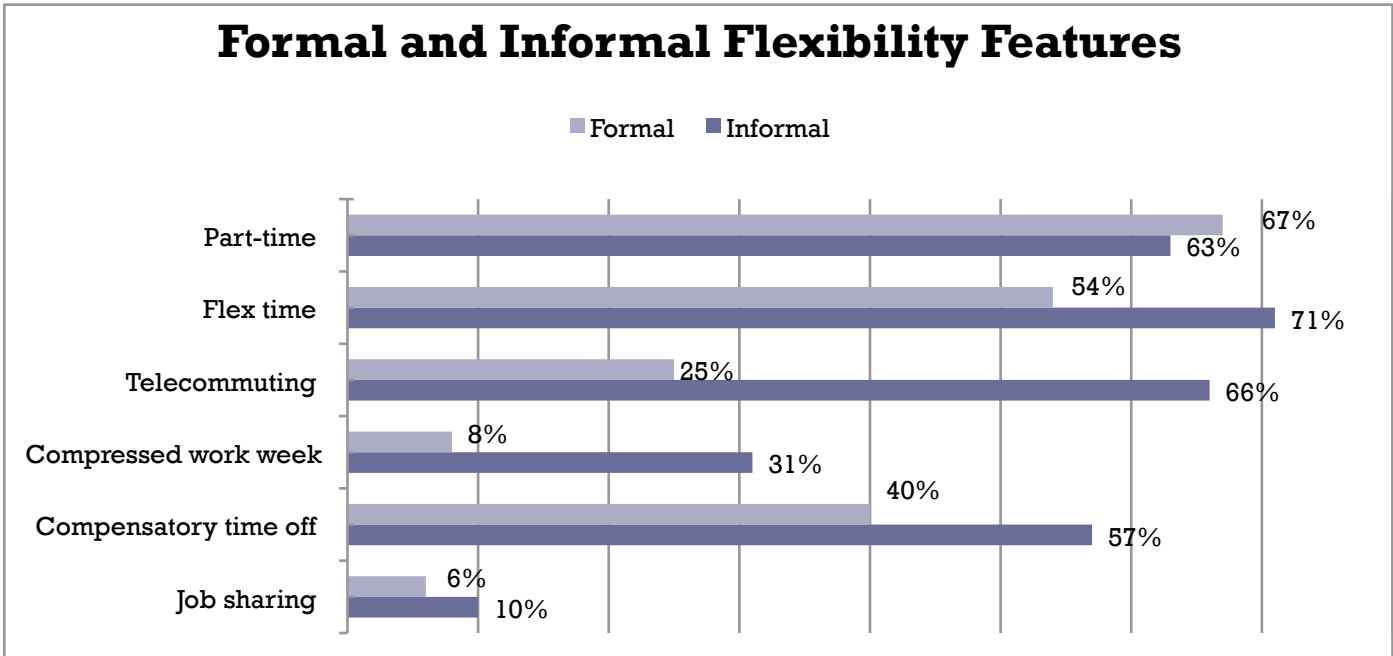
Nearly 90% of the Jewish organizations in this sample allow some degree of informal, unwritten flexibility.



For organizations with formal flexibility policies, 67% offer part-time employment and 54% offer flex time, as shown in the chart below. A large percentage (40%) provide for compensatory time off and one-quarter permit telecommuting. A limited number offer a compressed work week (8%) or job sharing (6%).

The practice of informal flexibility prevails across organizational type and size, albeit with some variation. The most frequently cited types of flexibility were flextime (71%), telecommuting (66%), part-time schedules (63%) and compensatory time off (57%). Just under one-third (31%) allowed for a compressed workweek. Ten percent of the responding organizations offer job-sharing.





**DISCUSSION: The Case for Formal Flexibility Policy**

An overwhelming majority of organizations in this survey offer informal flexibility. Informal flexibility, granted on a case-by-case basis, is better than none. The disadvantage is that individual professionals must depend on the benevolence and good sense of their supervisors. This approach, idiosyncratic rather than standardized, results in unequal access to flexible work arrangements and the perception of unfair employment practices.

Informal flexibility also may convey a mixed message about making progress on the career track since professionals who take advantage of these privileges may lose traction with respect to salaries and promotions. Even in organizations with formal, written policies, professionals may measure the risks and benefits of negotiating for alternative work arrangements. But the risk is greater in organizations where flexible scheduling is not recognized formally. Formal policies allow professionals, women in particular, to request and adopt alternative schedules that help them to balance personal and professional demands. As systematic and consistent policies, flexibility can lower barriers to women’s career advancement.

Formal flexibility policies also contribute to employee productivity. In the July 2009 Harvard Business Review Article, “How Gen Y & Boomers Will Reshape Your Agenda,” Sylvia Hewlett showcased corporations where work-life programs resulted in increased productivity. Hewlett, Founding President of the Center for Work Life Policy, studied Best Buy and CitiGroup, two companies where employees are accountable for results rather than office hours.<sup>1</sup> Since

implementing their Results-Only Work Environment, Best Buy's productivity has risen 35%<sup>2</sup>. Hewlett's findings underscore the common sense of work-life policy. Through implementation of work-life strategies, employees became increasingly accountable for coordinating teamwork, maximizing communication, and ensuring effectiveness.<sup>3</sup>

Workplace flexibility is also linked to long-term employee loyalty. At IBM, 94% of managers reported that flexible work options had a positive impact on the company's "ability to retain talented professionals."<sup>4</sup> A large majority of AstraZeneca's R&D employees (96%) say that workplace flexibility influenced their decision to stay at the company. A 2007 Watson Wyatt study showed that, when employees are satisfied with work-life balance, they are more inclined to stay with their companies (86% versus 64%) and more likely to recommend them as places to work (88% versus 55%).<sup>5</sup>

The comparative impact of informal-versus-formal policies on business outcomes was analyzed in a 2008 Work-Life Flexibility study conducted by Work+Life Fit and BDO Seidman. This study found that organizations with informal approaches to flexibility were less likely to experience the broad business impacts promised by work-life balance initiatives.<sup>6</sup>

This survey provides evidence that many Jewish organizations are utilizing informal flexibility. Given the clear need for such arrangements, common sense suggests that Jewish organizations would benefit by formalizing these alternative arrangements as explicit, systematic flexibility policies. Professionals who choose such options would advance their careers and improve their work-life balance. Organizations would benefit from increased productivity and employee loyalty.

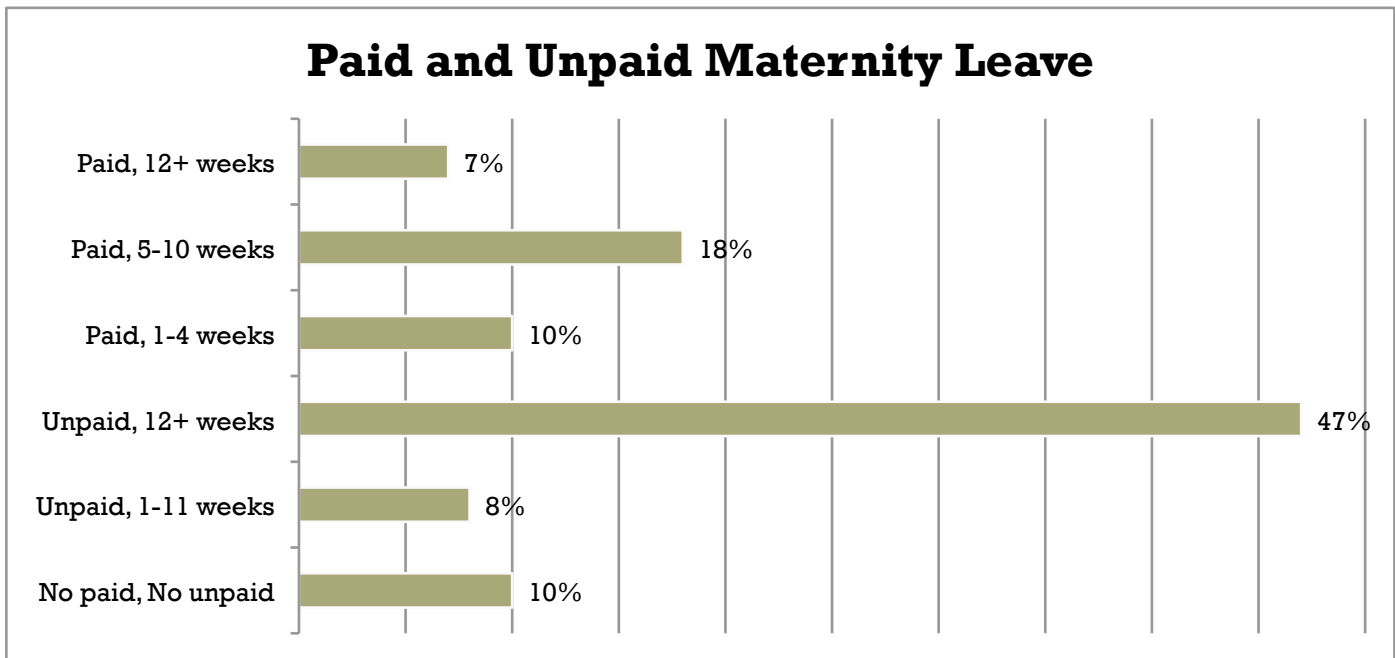
## MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVE

In the corporate and nonprofit sectors, policies for parental leave typically reference the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), a federal law established in 1993. The FMLA requires businesses and organizations with more than 50 employees who have worked more than 1,250 hours in the previous year, and who live in within a 75-mile radius to offer at least twelve weeks of unpaid leave.<sup>7</sup>

For the purposes of FMLA, family leave is construed as the time needed to care for personal health conditions, to provide medical care for immediate family members, or to care for a newborn or newly adopted child.

### FINDINGS: Maternity Leave Policies and Practices

For the Jewish organizations in this sample, just over half (59%) have a formal, written maternity leave policy. A large percentage of organizations (41%) reported that they do not have a formal, written maternity leave policy. Some of these organizations may grant their female employees paid or unpaid leave, but the terms are not specified in written policy.



As shown in the chart above, survey results were analyzed according to percentages of paid or unpaid leave provided by responding organizations.

Sixty-five percent of responding organizations offer no paid maternity leave. For the remaining 35% that do provide paid maternity leave, approximately 10% offer between one and four weeks, and 18% provide between five and ten weeks. Only seven percent of the responding organizations provide twelve weeks or more of paid maternity leave.

Unpaid maternity leave is more common, with nearly half of responding organizations (47%) offering twelve weeks or more. This result derives, in part, from compliance with FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act), the federal mandate that requires organizations with fifty or more employees to offer twelve weeks of unpaid family leave.

Survey results also yielded the fact that 10% of responding organizations do not provide for maternity leave, paid or unpaid.

### FINDINGS: Other Parental Leave Policies and Practices

Formal paternity leave policies exist in only 33% of responding Jewish organizations.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of the responding organizations offer no paternity leave, paid or unpaid. Six percent offer up to one month of unpaid paternity leave; one-third (33%) offer one month or more of unpaid leave.

In this survey sample, 11% offer up to one month of paid paternity leave; 12% provide one month or more of paid paternity leave. Seventy-seven percent of the responding organizations offer no paid paternity leave.

Just over one third (36%) of responding organizations apply parental leave policies to LGBT partners. Nearly half of the organizations (49%) extend parental leave policies to adoptive parents.

For maternity and other parental leave, both paid and unpaid, some organizations require that employees first apply their accumulated vacation and sick leave.

### DISCUSSION: The Case for Paid Maternity and Parental Leave

A positive approach to maternity and parental leave protects an organization's investment in its workforce. Paid leave, accompanied by flexible scheduling, increases the probability of the parent returning to the organization as a productive professional and making a long-term commitment.

A recent report by the Boston College Center for Work & Family underscored the organizational benefits of generous parental leave policy, including:

- Reduced recruitment and training costs;
- Improved staff productivity and morale;
- Increased number of employees returning to work; and
- Organizational effectiveness, resulting from longer tenure, e.g., institutional memory, industry knowledge and robust networks.<sup>8</sup>

Research by the Institute for Women's Policy Research further demonstrates the benefits of paid maternity leave to mother and child. Women who have access to some form of paid leave (including maternity, vacation and sick leave) take an average of 10.5 weeks after childbirth, while women without paid leave take 6.6 weeks. Women who take more paid time off after childbirth report positive health effects for both women and children.<sup>9</sup>

In the corporate world, some organizations have established generous maternity leave policies that far exceed FMLA requirements:

- At Johnson & Johnson, new mothers with job tenure of five years or more receive 26 paid weeks of maternity leave.<sup>10</sup>
- The Goldman Sachs Group offers 16 weeks of paid maternity leave, four weeks for new fathers and eight weeks for adoptive parents.<sup>11</sup>
- A survey by Lateral Link, a legal recruiting firm, found that the majority of law firms (60%) offer at least 12 weeks of paid maternity leave.<sup>12</sup>

In the Jewish community, some of the religious denominations have written generous parental leave policies for rabbis. In the Conservative Movement, the Rabbinical Assembly contract includes three months paid maternity leave to incoming rabbis. In the Reform Movement, guidelines from the Central Conference of American Rabbis recommend at least two months paid leave. The Reconstructionist Movement recommends that synagogues provide eight weeks paid leave for the primary parent.

Many organizations may be daunted by the budgetary consequences of paid parental leave at the most generous levels. However, recruitment and training of replacement staff also call for significant resources. Meeting the challenge of paid parental leave will be balanced over the long term by the benefits of attracting, retaining and advancing a loyal, motivated cadre of high-potential professionals.

### CONCLUSION: Making the Case for Comprehensive Work-Life Policy

Research in the corporate sector strongly suggests that comprehensive work-life policy improves employee recruitment and retention, increases productivity and drives organizational effectiveness.

Employees with access to flexibility and paid parental leave demonstrate greater loyalty to their organizations. They are nearly three times as likely to report job satisfaction, a factor closely linked to productivity.<sup>13</sup> Women report more job satisfaction and are more likely to stay after having a child when their organizations are responsive to work-family needs.<sup>14</sup>

Talent recruitment and cultivation remains a top priority for Jewish organizations that want to succeed in challenging environments. Increasingly, the Jewish community is competing with the public and private sectors for high-potential professionals. Intelligent work-life policy is an opportunity to gain the competitive edge when seeking high-potential professionals. Women and men, of every generation, are pursuing jobs and careers that offer flexibility and generous parental leave. In the Harvard Business Review article cited earlier (July 2009), 89% of younger

workers and 87% of Baby Boomers, rated work-life balance as a key attribute of desirable workplaces.<sup>15</sup>

Retention is also a contributing factor to the bottom line. High rates of job turnover can negatively affect organizations, with each replacement costing up to 150% of an annual salary. Sensible work-life policy results in lower job turnover and reduced costs for hiring and training new staff.<sup>16</sup>

Leadership development and succession, a topic much in the nonprofit media, offers another context for considering work-life policy. Within the next five to ten years, a wave of retirement will shift the demographics of Jewish organizations, with a new generation rising to CEO and senior manager positions.<sup>17</sup> These future executives are today's high-potential professionals. While these young women and men aspire to leadership on behalf of the Jewish community, they fully expect to integrate their professional goals and their personal lives. Indeed, this is the generation raised to cherish Jewish family, learning, culture and spirituality. Preparing these professionals for their inevitable ascendancy requires a new orientation to management and organizational effectiveness.<sup>18</sup>

## AWP RECOMMENDATIONS

Following this report of national survey findings, AWP encourages every Jewish organization to start the conversation about the potential link between work-life balance and organizational effectiveness. Work-life policy can serve as a strategic lever for Jewish organizations, to make the shift from working harder to working smarter. This will lead to new standards of professional excellence, focused less on face-time and more on stated goals and measurable results.

While this report summarizes survey findings related to flexibility and parental leave, AWP supports the principle that care giving and personal choices stretch across the life cycle, including but not limited to family life. The responsibility for an aging relative is as legitimate as tending a newborn. Volunteer activities and graduate education is worthy of attention and respect when considering requests for flexible scheduling. Comprehensive work-life policy has the potential to serve as a binding force between organizational vision and Jewish values.

AWP recommends the following personnel policies as the “gold standard” for supporting work-life balance in Jewish organizations:

### 1. Formal Flexibility Policy

AWP recommends that Jewish organizations develop formal, written flexibility policies, with consistent guidelines for accessing and maintaining these privileges. Informal flexibility already exists in many organizations. The shift to formal policy will improve organizational effectiveness and remove obstacles for women professionals on the career trajectory.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Maternity and Parental Leave Policies

- **Paid Maternity Leave.** AWP recommends that all Jewish organizations aspire toward paid maternity leave, with three months as the “gold standard.” This can be linked to tenure, with one month of paid maternity leave for each year of employment, up to three months.
- **Unpaid Maternity Leave.** Federal standards of the Family Leave Medical Act mandate that organizations with 50 or more employees offer 12 weeks unpaid maternity leave. AWP recommends this standard for all Jewish organizations that choose to offer unpaid leave, regardless of size.
- **Parental Leave.** AWP values the aspiration to provide equal benefits to all parents. At a minimum, AWP recommends one month paid leave to all partners.

AWP recognizes that these “gold standard” policies may not be feasible for all organizations. These recommendations are presented as aspirational goals. What has already been achieved by some Jewish organizations can serve as models for the entire community.

For organizations that are ready to develop new or expanded work-life policies, AWP recommends the following:

- **Open the discussion.** Work-life policies have a better chance of success when senior executives, lay leaders, and professional staff collaborate as partners, to understand the needs and build the organizational case.
- **Review and revise work structures.** Good intentions are not enough to ensure the success of new or expanded work-life policies. This is an opportunity to examine and refresh the organization’s strategy, goals, processes, and habits.
- **Formalize work-life policies.** Work-life policy, stated in an organization’s personnel handbook, gives management and professionals a common reference guide. Policies should include: parameters (e.g., types of flexibility or the formula for paid parental leave) and the process for accessing these privileges.
- **Create a supportive environment.** Statements of work-life policy in the personnel handbook are necessary, but not sufficient, to create a supportive organizational culture. Employees will take note of whether management encourages or discourages these policies, to gauge their impact on the career track.
- **Train the management.** Work-life programs move organizations toward a new management philosophy, focused on results. Managers will need training and support to review their own work styles and to supervise and evaluate staff performance in this new environment.

## JOIN THE “100” – AWP BETTER WORK LIFE CAMPAIGN

This report marks the first stage of AWP’s Better Work-Life Campaign. Through this effort, AWP seeks to influence Jewish organizations to adopt new approaches to work-life balance and organizational effectiveness. Our goal is to improve work-life policies at 100 Jewish organizations by the end of 2010.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AWP would like to acknowledge the major support that makes our work possible, with profound thanks to Barbara and Eric Dobkin, Terry Meyerhoff Rubenstein and the Lyn P. Meyerhoff Foundation, Froma Benerofe, the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, and Sally Gottesman. Board members Barbara Dobkin, Cindy Chazan, Judith Stern Peck and Audrey Weiner provided invaluable counsel.

We are grateful to Renae Cohen, Ph.D., Director of the JESNA Berman Center for Research and Evaluation for her fine work on the project. Professor Steven M. Cohen, AWP’s Research Advisor, analyzed the data and guided the development of this report through every stage. Marci Koblenz, a leading work-life expert, founder of MK Consultants LTD, sharpened our understanding of policy issues and helped to develop the survey questions. Our AWP colleague Rabbi Joanna Samuels provided important insights and offered best practices from the denominations. We thank Alan Cohen, Sally Gottesman, and Cindy Greenberg, thoughtful readers whose comments freshened our thinking about this work.

Our thanks to the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies for becoming the first foundation sponsor of AWP’s Better Work Life Campaign.

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<sup>1</sup> Hewlett, Sylvia A., Laura Sherbin, and Karen Sumberg. "How Gen Y & Boomers Will Reshape Your Agenda." *Harvard Business Review* July-Aug. 2009. Print.

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To see the complete annotated tables from the survey fielded by the JESNA Berman Center for Research and Evaluation, including data about vacation and sick leave policies, send an email to: [info@advancingwomen.org](mailto:info@advancingwomen.org) or call 212-869-9700 x217.