

## Working Parents Feel Supported at Winston

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When Winston announced an expanded parental leave policy last year, the press called it “a pretty big deal in the legal industry” (*Huffington Post*, May 18, 2016). The firm’s gender-neutral support program for working parents continues to be among the most progressive in the industry.

Winston offers 20 weeks of paid parental leave for mothers and fathers to care for and bond with a newborn or newly adopted child, along with a **Parental Leave Transition Support Program** that includes a Parental Leave Liaison (PLL) partner resource, reduced hours targets during “ramp-down” and “ramp-up” periods, and confidential coaching services. Winston’s program recently received Family Leave category honors in Yale Law Women’s “Top 10 Family Friendly Firms of 2017” survey.

“A key element of the PLL initiative is to provide clear and consistent information to attorneys to help them announce and plan their leave and navigate their return to the firm after their leave,” said Chicago Partner **Julia Johnson**, who serves in the PLL role. The initiative has already had great success in helping attorneys maintain their connection to the firm during their leaves; associates have commented: “I’m just so glad that I have someone that I can call if I have questions or I’m struggling at all,” and “I cannot tell you how supported I feel at Winston.”

“The importance of the firm’s parental leave policy cannot be understated,” said Chicago Of Counsel **Brian Nisbet**. “It allows you to focus on the most important thing going on in your life at that moment—having a new baby. I have taken time with all three of my kids, and have felt fully supported by the firm and those I work with. It is a great benefit, and one that I think is unique compared to other law firms.”

Additional policies and benefits Winston offers to its attorneys include flexible work arrangements through the Reduced Hours program, a low-cost backup childcare program, on-site nursing rooms, Milk Stork® assistance in shipping milk home during business travel, and same-sex domestic partner benefits. The Diversity & Flexibility Alliance recently awarded Winston its inaugural “Flex Impact Award,” which recognizes policies poised to have a significant impact on the culture of flexibility in an organization.

Last December, Julia and Joanna presented a well-received internal teleconference titled, “Parent-Friendly Policies: A Panel Discussion,” for Winston attorneys to learn more about how the firm’s reduced hours and parental leave programs work in real life. The program included stories from female and male attorneys who have used the programs during their careers at Winston.

“I’m proud to be associated with a firm that is, in many ways, serving as an industry trailblazer with its progressive and robust parental leave policy,” Chicago Partner **Sean Wieber** said. “As a father of two daughters, I’ve unapologetically taken parental leave twice—as a mid-level and a senior associate—and I now advocate for my male colleagues to take advantage of the firm’s parental leave policy. As more men take parental leave, the unfounded stigma associated with such a decision is pushed down one more rung.”

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