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Report Highlights

Evaluation of Parental Leave Policies and Practices for State Employees

Response to HCR93 of the 2019 Regular Legislative Session

Audit Control # 40190014

Performance Audit Services • December 2019

Why We Conducted This Audit

House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 93 of the 2019 Regular Legislative Session requested that the Legislative Auditor compile all policies relative to family and parental leave for state employees, compare the policies, and report on the status of these policies. According to HCR 93, such a review is important because offering competitive family and parental leave to employees can be an effective recruiting tool, enhance the work environment, and increase employee retention; and it is important to understand how Louisiana's policies compare with competitive best practices states.

What We Found

Overall, we found inconsistencies within and across state agencies regarding FMLA/parental leave policies and the implementation of FMLA/parental leave. Specifically we found:

- **While executive and judicial agencies are subject to FMLA, legislative offices are not. As a result, we found that the parental leave policies of most legislative offices do not mirror FMLA protections.** Although legislative offices are not required to follow FMLA, developing parental leave policies that mirror FMLA provisions would offer employees of legislative offices more economic security and stability for their families.
- **Parental leave policies for state employees vary in the level of detail and do not always include all provisions of FMLA.** In addition, most policies do not include the protections provided by Louisiana's pregnancy anti-discrimination statutes, which allow female employees who become disabled as a result of pregnancy or childbirth up to 16 weeks of leave.
- **We identified inconsistencies in leave usage for parental leave within and across executive agencies. There is no entity within the state that is responsible for ensuring consistent leave usage; instead, it is left up to the individual agencies.** For example, some agencies require employees to use FMLA for prenatal visits, while others do not. We also identified inconsistencies in FMLA usage for prenatal doctor visits within agencies.
- **Other states and some entities in Louisiana provide additional protections and benefits for parents. Adopting these protections and benefits for all state employees may improve Louisiana's competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining state employees.** These protections and benefits include paid maternity and paternity leave, and access to flexible sick leave which parents can use to care for sick children, including babies born prematurely with resulting health complications.

View the full report at www.la.gov.