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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RESEARCHERS: MOMS NEED MORE THAN 6 WEEKS MATERNITY LEAVE
Urging National Paid Family Leave Policies

NEW YORK CITY – Pointing to evidence that newborns benefit greatly from breastfeeding, and other sustained, physical, nurturing contact with their mothers, and that six weeks of maternity leave is often not enough time for adequate recovery from childbirth, researchers at the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) are recommending that U.S. policymakers establish 14 weeks of universal paid leave for new mothers, as part of a national comprehensive paid family leave policy.

In a new brief focusing on paid family leave, NCCP – a child poverty research center based at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health – acknowledges that paid family leave in the United States is “a work in progress,” (only two states – California and New Jersey – currently have such policies) and in that spirit, recommends the extension of maternity leave to more than double the current norm.

“Our analysis explores multiple health benefits for infants who are breastfed and shows that paid family leave typically increases the length of time that mothers breastfeed – which in turn dramatically increases the neurological and psychosocial development of the infant,” says Kalyani Thampi, a research analyst at NCCP, and an organizer of an April 25 [Forum on Paid Family Leave](#) in New York State. “Research shows that paid family leave policies could result in improved outcomes in child health and development, maternal health, and parent-child relationships. NCCP’s report and our upcoming forum bring to light these early childhood and public health benefits while supporting a cross-disciplinary approach to paid family leave research and policy advocacy.”

“In 2012, the United States remains the only industrialized nation without a national paid family leave program that supports workers who need time off to attend to important family needs, such as caring for a new baby or sick child,” says Curtis Skinner, PhD, director of family economic security at NCCP, which is producing the forum with partners [New York State Paid Leave Coalition](#), and [A Better Balance](#), with support from the Ford, Annie E. Casey, and Hagedorn foundations.

Among other things, the researchers also recommend policymakers craft policies that:

- permit leave to be taken intermittently for other purposes, including caring for children with chronic illnesses and other special health needs;
- replace at least two-thirds of wages to make leave-taking more affordable to workers and guarantee job protection; and
- extend coverage to both full- and part-time workers, to employees in small businesses, and to self-employed workers.

Further, NCCP recommends that business groups publicize the evidence-based advantages of universal paid family leave programs for companies – leveling the competitive playing field,

offering savings for companies already providing employer-paid leave, and improving employee morale, job retention, and productivity.

For the complete brief, “Paid Family Leave: Strengthening Families and Our Future,” including the full set of NCCP’s recommendations, access:

http://nccp.org/publications/pub_1059.html. For more on the April 25 [Forum on Paid Family Leave](#): http://www.nccp.org/projects/paid_leave.html.

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The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) is one of the nation’s leading public policy centers and is dedicated to promoting the economic security, health and well-being of America’s low-income families and children. Part of Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, NCCP uses research to inform policy and practice with the goal of ensuring positive outcomes for the next generation.