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Strive

Issue 1, 2016

BAKER DONELSON WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

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Is It Time to Take a Fresh Look at Your Parental Leave Policy?



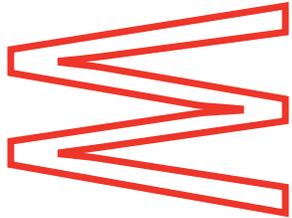
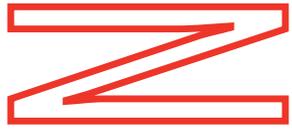
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In 2014, Baker Donelson’s Women’s Initiative decided it was time to revisit our decade-old parental leave policy. While the policy was still competitive in our market, offering 12 weeks of leave for primary caregivers, we wanted to do more to improve the success of our attorneys’ leaves. In order to determine what changes needed to be made, we looked at the benefits offered at other law firms across the country and then dove deeper into non-legal fields. We held meetings with attorneys at our Firm to determine how our policy could better fit their lives and practices. Our goals were improved recruitment, retention and client service surrounding leave.

In October 2014, after going through more drafts than we can remember, we implemented a market-leading parental leave policy which increased the amount of parental leave available to primary caregivers from 12 weeks to 16 weeks. The unique and most exciting part of the policy was a change from a one-size-fits-all model to a leave policy that could be tailored to the individual attorney’s life and practice. Specifically, our leave policy now permits leave to be taken intermittently in the 40 weeks surrounding a child’s birth. That language provides attorneys with the opportunity to ramp down work as leave approaches, stay in touch with clients as leave progresses and transition back to full-time work at their own pace.



Is It Time to Take a Fresh Look at Your Parental Leave Policy?, *continued*

Since the policy's inception, 40 individuals – associates and shareholders alike – have taken successful leave under its terms. Our attorneys report that they felt more freedom both during the initial months of leave and while transitioning back to work, as they were able to address necessary tasks while knowing that the banked leave time could be spent with their children months later. They also relay that their clients were not negatively affected by their absences in the same way that they may have been had the leave been taken all at once without the opportunity to stay involved.

Paid parental leave is gaining traction on the national stage. Is it time to take a fresh look at your business's parental leave policy? Here is our **Baker's Dozen** of items to consider when evaluating your parental leave program and implementing a new one:

1 *Establish your goals.* Knowing what you want out of a parental leave policy is the first step. Do you want to retain your best talent? Do you want to minimize the effect leave has on your clients? Do you want to make your policy gender-neutral? All of the above?

2 *Evaluate your current policy.* What works well? Where have you had hiccups? Are your clients being served well by your policy? Are your employees happy when they transition back from leave? We examined these questions as a starting point in our research.

3 *Look at your employee mix.* What are your demographics? What kind of employees typically take leave? Your policy may need to be tailored depending on who you are serving.

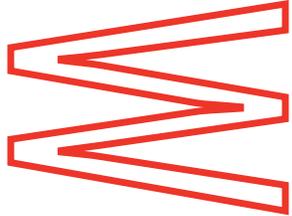
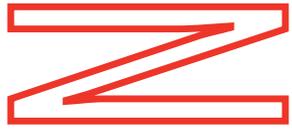
4 *Consider the gender issue.* A gender-neutral policy is not only the best bet legally, but it will help the men and women in your office by removing outmoded stereotypes surrounding caregiving.

5 *Look at your competitors.* What is the guy next door doing? Are you ahead or behind? Competitor policies offer helpful benchmarks in drafting your new language and give you support for the proposal you present to your management team.

6 *Phone a friend.* Some fantastic ideas came from friends at other businesses. Call yours to find out what creative solutions they've employed.

7 *Make the business case for offering more leave.* When we did research into the economics of offering more leave to our employees, we found a monetary benefit in offering longer leave to keep our best talent.

8 *Make sure you're legal.* When drafting your leave policy, have your employment law attorney on speed-dial.



Is It Time to Take a Fresh Look at Your Parental Leave Policy?, *continued*

9 *Tap mentors.* One of the best decisions we made was to appoint parental leave advisors in every office. They serve as mentors to attorneys taking leave by assisting them before leave begins and as it progresses. They know the policy inside and out and can answer the tough questions.

10 *Get buy-in from human resources.* Your HR department will be your partner in implementing your new policy. Keep HR involved as you make big decisions.

11 *Conduct trainings.* After the policy is in place, train until you can train no more. Train your management, train your leaders, train your mentors and conduct a thorough rollout to your employees as a whole. We offered Q&A sessions after each training.

12 *Measure success along the way.* As the Parental Leave Committee Chairs, this policy is – for lack of a better word – our baby. To ensure that it is successful, we monitor every leave that is taken to make sure the intermittent policy is used as intended, the transition goes well and to uncover any surprises. We also recommend monitoring the overall stats to learn how your goals are being achieved. For example, we were pleasantly surprised to learn that of the 40 individuals taking leave in the first year, 22 of them were men. Our previous, non-intermittent policy was under-utilized by non-primary

caregivers, who receive three weeks of parental leave surrounding the birth, adoption or foster of a child. Now that they are able to take the leave as needed in the months following birth, non-primary caregivers report that the leave is much more attractive and useful to them. The fact that our new policy is being used by more men than women is the first step to a truly gender-neutral leave policy in practice, and we could not be more thrilled with the results.

13 *Don't forget the men!* Our internal monitoring emphasized the need to ensure that our male attorneys' questions and concerns were well addressed. In executing your policy, do not neglect the needs of the men in your organization. At Baker Donelson, we have interviewed male attorneys regarding the challenges of leave, appointed male parental leave advisors and conducted training of male leadership.

If you have any questions about our leave policy, or how you can reevaluate yours, please contact Baker Donelson's Parental Leave advisors, [Sara Turner](#) and [Caldwell Collins](#).

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Jill Steinberg accepts Baker Donelson's WILEF Certification award

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Baker Donelson Becomes a WILEF Gold Standard Certified Firm



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In 2015, Baker Donelson became a Women in Law Empowerment Forum (WILEF) Gold Standard Certified Firm. WILEF was established in 2007 with the purpose of educating and providing networking opportunities for women in law firms. WILEF created the WILEF Gold Standard Certification as a way to encourage the development of women in law firms. WILEF certification emphasizes the leadership roles achieved by equity women partners, rather than the policies or practices of the firm, or the overall number or percentage of women partners. To become WILEF certified, a firm with 300 or more practicing lawyers in the United States must successfully demonstrate that women represent a meaningful percentage of the firm's equity partners, highest leadership positions, governance and compensation committees, and most highly compensated partners. In order to meet the "meaningful percentage" criteria, an eligible firm must satisfy four or more of the following requirements:

- Women account for at least 20% of equity partners, or alternatively, 33% or more of the attorneys becoming equity partners during the past 12 months.

- Women represent at least 10% of firm chairs and office managing partners.
- Women make up at least 20% of the firm's primary governance committee.
- Women represent 20% or more of the firm's compensation committee.
- Women make up at least 25% of practice group leaders or department heads.
- Women represent at least 10% of the top half of the most highly compensated partners.

Only 50 law firms in the U.S. achieved this certification in 2015, and these firms were invited to a luncheon at the Yale Club of New York City to celebrate their achievement. Jill Steinberg attended the luncheon on Baker Donelson's behalf to accept the award.

WILEF Certification is an on-going process requiring firms to meet the criteria every year to maintain their certification.

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Time Saver Savvy – A Working Mom’s Guide to Spending More Quality Time with the Kids



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As a mother of three children at very different stages of their lives (one high school, one middle school and one lower school), I have often struggled to carve out “quality time” with my children. Sure, we spend lots of time chauffeuring our kids to different events and sitting on the sidelines or in the stands cheering them on, but it is also important to focus on solid quality time with your children. Below are some of my top tips to ensure you can squeeze in as much quality time with your children as possible:



Infants

The number one suggestion I have for working moms: TAKE ALL OF YOUR MATERNITY LEAVE (and I mean every single day of it). You only have the opportunity to bond with your newborn once. I took the full 12 weeks (the maximum amount of time allowed then under my firm’s maternity leave policy) for all three of my children. Even with my third child when I was an equity partner, I took 12 weeks. The firm had no policy for equity partners, so I called my firm’s CEO and asked what to do. We crafted an arrangement where I moved my clients to another partner for 12 weeks and as soon as I came back, the clients were returned to me. When my children were infants, it was also incredibly important to me that they be near my work so I could be there for them on short notice. I also cherished the ability to spend 30-45 minutes every day eating lunch with or nursing my baby at daycare. Be sure to

always call ahead, though, and make sure the baby is not sleeping. I would have their caregiver call me when my babies woke up, so I could have maximum baby-mommy time.



Youngsters

My number one rule for volunteering for lower (elementary) school activities: I won’t do it unless it actively involves my child, as well. I have seen working moms whiling away hours laminating school posters in an effort to volunteer at school, but there are a lot more meaningful ways to participate at your child’s school that include you and your child. I have always been a room mom for my kids – that means that I planned the school parties, and I was always at the party. My kids loved bragging that their mom was the room mom. I would also volunteer as a Girl Scout leader or a Sunday School teacher for my children. In these ways, you get to interact with your child and their friends and get kudos for being a school or community volunteer.

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Time Saver Savvy, *continued*

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Tweens

Aa I have read and will continue to read chapter books to my children until they reach high school (I stopped reading to my eldest child when her reading fluency and comprehension outstripped my own). Reading to your child seems like something to do with young kids, but I found it to be a great way to spend quality time with a child at night before bed or on the weekend snuggled up by the fireplace. I have always let my child pick the novel we are reading. I loved my eldest child's choices as a tween (*Wuthering Heights*, *Pride and Prejudice*), but not so much with my middle daughter (the *Twilight* Series). Regardless, the point is that we would have uninterrupted time together. I just finished reading *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy to my son. It took us two and one-half years, but when I read the last page to him, he hugged me and said "Reading with you is really special to me, Mom." The thing is, it is just as special to me.

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will join the two of us for a fancy dinner out, and the two girls get to choose the restaurant. I love spending time with my daughter and with my friend. Finally, I have tried to combine her bucket list with my bucket list. I had never been to Detroit, and she loves the boy band One Direction (1D), so for her birthday present, we flew to Detroit to see 1D. We spent the weekend touring the Detroit Art Institute (amazing!), biking on Bell Island and, of course, jamming on the first row at the 1D concert.

As a busy mom, you always need to look for opportunities to spend quality one-on-one time with your children. You will benefit from it just as much as your child does.



Teens

My best tip for engaging with your teenager is to find activities/outings that you both enjoy. My teenage daughter and I have a Starbucks date every week where I pick her up from school and we grab two Frappuccinos®, sit on the outdoor deck at Starbucks and talk. I am also friends with several of her friends' mothers, so we often have a girls' night out where a friend and the mom



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Office Spotlight

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Chattanooga Hosts Holiday Sip and Shop

The Chattanooga Women's Initiative hosted a holiday Sip and Shop on November 5 at the Walden Club in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Approximately 50 guests attended the event where they were invited to kick off the holiday season as they enjoyed refreshments and browsed items from a variety of vendors for gifts like jewelry, handmade wood gifts, cosmetics, artwork and more.

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Birmingham Partners with Ronald McDonald House; Hosts "Third Thursday" Networking Event

The Birmingham Women's Initiative met on December 22 and created 42 gift bags for the families at the Ronald McDonald house filled with crayons, markers, stuffed animals, puzzle books and cosmetic items and delivered them to the residents at the local Birmingham house. It was a great way for the women in the office to spend time together and create something special for a family in need.



Baker Donelson attorneys Nicole DeMaise (left) and Mary O'Kelley (center) visit with guests and colleagues at the Sip and Shop.



L to R: Carla Lewis, Natalie Bolling, Mary Noel Sellers, Julie Schiff, Sharonda Childs, Elizabeth Hollie, Catherine Long, Sarah Hodo and Vaun Jemison assemble holiday bags for the Ronald McDonald House.



Nicole DeMaise enjoys a cosmetics demonstration from one of the vendors.

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Office Spotlight

Last quarter, the Birmingham office also started the BakerWomen “Third Thursday” cocktail hour for the women attorneys in the office. As many of the male attorneys eat lunch together nearly every day, or work out at the gym, they are having conversations about their businesses, cases, new clients and life in general. Women are so busy pulling a double shift that they have to maximize their time at the office before going home to start their duties there. As a result, the women weren’t having as many of those important networking, relationship-building conversations. The Women’s Initiative leaders decided that creating opportunities for the women to get together, however briefly, was needed. It’s just an hour, they only have to walk downstairs, and they will stay in step with what the other women attorneys in the office are working on. It’s a chance to collaborate and to provide support – and for the new women attorneys to get to know others in the office.

Baton Rouge Hosts Client Networking Dinner

On October 8, the Baton Rouge Women’s Initiative hosted a client dinner for approximately 16 people at Matherne’s. They enjoyed a dinner and wine pairing and offered guests a chance to win door prizes.

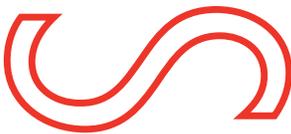
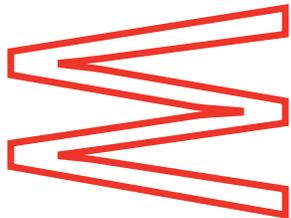
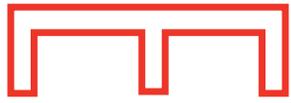
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Washington, D.C., Pampers Guests at Spa Night

On February 3, the women attorneys and advisors in the Washington, D.C., office hosted a spa night to raise money for N Street Village. More than 30 women joined the attorneys and advisors at the Red Door Spa at The Willard where they learned about the mission of N Street Village and networked between spa treatments. The event raised more than \$6,500 for N Street Village, a community of empowerment and recovery for homeless and low-income women in Washington, D.C.

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Connect with the Women's Initiative on Social Media



[WI Twitter](#)
[@BDWomen](#)



[WI LinkedIn](#)



[WI Homepage](#)

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New Faces at the Firm



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Baker Donelson Women in the News

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Wendy Huff Ellard Recognized by [American Bar Association's Young Lawyer's Division](#)



Martha Boyd Named to [Nashville Business Journal's](#) 2016 "Women of Influence"



Sheryl Bey Named to [Mississippi Business Journal's](#) 2015 "Leadership in Law"



Jamie Ballinger-Holden Named to [Greater Knoxville Business Journal's](#) "40 Under 40"

On Friday, December 11 at the Knoxville Bar Association (KBA) Annual Meeting, [LeAnn Mynatt](#) (Knoxville) was awarded the Courage in the Face of Adversity Award by the Knoxville Bar Association. The award, which is only given when special circumstances present themselves, was awarded to LeAnn for the courage she has shown in confronting ovarian cancer. Taking on the disease alone was not enough for LeAnn who, along with the Knoxville Women's Initiative, partnered with the Cancer Institute at the University of Tennessee Medical Center to found the annual "Comedy for a Cause" event. "Comedy for a Cause" raises money for ovarian cancer research and promotes awareness of the subtle

signs of ovarian cancer. LeAnn has also shared her story in numerous other formats, including local TV, to promote awareness of the disease.

At the same event, [Jamie Ballinger-Holden](#) (Knoxville) was awarded the President's Award for Outstanding Service to the KBA. The President's Award is given at the KBA President's discretion. Jamie was recognized for co-Chairing the first ever Open Service Program for the KBA, which organized and staffed a monthly service project every month in 2015, resulting in much-needed help to 12 diverse Knoxville charitable organizations.



LeAnn Mynatt accepts the Courage in the Face of Adversity Award.



Jamie Ballinger-Holden accepts the President's Award for Outstanding Service to the KBA

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Baker Donelson Women in the News, *continued*



Jill Steinberg Elected a Member of [Tennessee Chapter of ABOTA](#)



Amy Elder Elected to Board of Trustees of the [International Association of Gaming Advisors](#)



Sheri Fox Discusses New Role as Executive Director of Legal Aid of East Tennessee in [Hamilton County Herald](#)



Mimi Koch Named Among 2015 "Women of the Year" by [CityBusiness](#)



Alabama Diversity Council Names Jenna Bedsole Among [Alabama's Top Business Women](#)



Alisa Chestler Comments on FTC Security Enforcement Case against LabMD in [Fierce Health-IT](#)



Lisa Borden Comments on Attorneys Honored for Their Pro Bono Work in the [Birmingham Business Journal](#)



Michaela Poizner Talks with [Part B News](#) About Exclusions from Meaningful Use Public Health Reporting



Lisa Borden Quoted in [AL.com](#) on Impact of Alabama DMV Closures



[Law360 Highlights](#) the Addition of Carmalita "CC" Carletos-Drayton

Baker Donelson Named Among [Fortune's 100 Best Workplaces for Women](#)



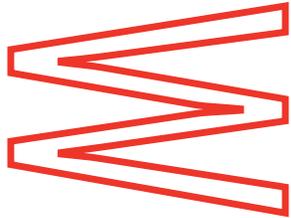
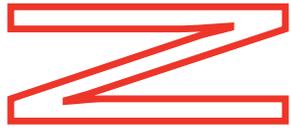
Layna Cook Rush Talks with Wolters Kluwer [Health Law Daily](#) About State Exchanges Post-King v. Burwell



Linda Klein Featured in [Atlanta Business Chronicle's](#) "2015 Who's Who in Law & Accounting"



Rachel Barlotta Discusses Compensable Training Time Under the FLSA in [Bloomberg BNA L&E Blog](#)



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Baker Donelson Women in the News, *continued*



Lisa Borden Comments on Private Probation Company Discontinuing Services in Alabama in [AL.com](#)



Michaela Poizner Discusses Meaningful Use Audit Mistakes to Avoid in [Part B News](#)



Jenna Bedsole Named Among [Birmingham Business Journal's](#) 2015 Women to Watch

Looking for an "OnRamp" Back into Legal?

Baker Donelson is among a select group of leading national law firms participating in the [OnRamp Fellowship](#), an innovative program that provides women lawyers re-entering the legal profession with an opportunity to update their skills and legal contacts through one-year paid positions with top

law firms. The program aims to replenish the talent pipeline in law firms with diverse, high-performing lawyers who have the potential and the desire to advance into leadership roles. To apply for one of the positions Baker Donelson has with the OnRamp Fellowship, [click here](#).

The Baker Donelson Women's Initiative Newsletter

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We want your feedback! Let us know what you think and share tips and tricks with us [here](#).

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