IWPR’s Paid Leave Convening Sparks New Research Collaborations

By Youngmin Yi

Paid sick days and paid family leave are essential to a workers’ economic security, as well as that of their families. The job and income security that these policies provide allow a worker to stay home when ill, an adult daughter to take her elderly parent to a doctor’s appointment, or a parent to take time to keep their child at home when he is too sick to go to school. These laws also protect co-workers, colleagues, students, teachers, and customers, helping to avoid the spread of contagious illness. To streamline and coordinate research and advocacy work on paid sick leave, IWPR partnered with the Work Family Strategy Council in convening a meeting of more than 50 academics, policy researchers, advocates, and government experts. On September 10, 2012, these experts participated in a day-long meeting at the national offices of the American Association of University Women.

Attendees included government experts such as Chief Economist Adriana Kugler of the U.S. Department of Labor and Dr. Abay Asfaw of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; leaders in the paid leave advocacy movement such as Ellen Bravo of Family Values @ Work and Vicki Shabo of the National Partnership of Women and Families; academic researchers with expertise in the area of paid leave research; and policy experts from research groups such as the Center for Economic and Policy Research and Abt Associates.

The convening provided an opportunity for networking, information sharing, and catalyzing new ideas for (Con’t on p. 3)

Financing Child Care on College Campuses

By Caroline Dobuzinskis

Financing Child Care for Student Parents: A Toolkit for Colleges, Universities, Program Leaders, Policymakers and Advocates, a new resource by IWPR’s Student Parent Success Initiative (SPSI), aims to fill a gap in affordable child care for student parents by easing access to a wide range of public, private, college, and university funding sources. The toolkit includes information gathered from original surveys, analyses, interviews, and other research methods, providing a comprehensive and valuable roadmap to the student or administrator navigating through child care funding.

On November 30, a SPSI hosted-webinar with more than 150 attendees gave an overview of child care funding programs for student parents. The webinar previewed the child care financing toolkit by Todd Boressoff, President of Early Childhood Consultants. The Financing Child Care Toolkit showcases various funding options to support on-campus child care. In addition to Mr. Boressoff, speakers included Christine Johnson-Staub, (Con’t on p. 3)
Shortly after the election, I was honored to be invited to a meeting with senior White House staff to discuss issues of particular concern to women leaders. Happily, President Barack Obama was able to join us. The conversation was cordial and informal, and he invited the 15 leaders present to share our concerns with him. The range of issues mentioned was impressive, from passage of the stalled renewal of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and federal judiciary appointments to various economic issues such as equal pay and maintaining Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security because of their disproportionate importance to women.

I was able to pitch the importance of passing a national paid family leave system for American women (the United States being only one of three countries in the entire world that does not mandate paid maternity leaves), as well as of adding care-giving credits to Social Security. Together these would help women and men who reduce their work time to care for family members with income replacement and also strengthen their earnings records with credits, thereby increasing their future retirement benefits. I remarked that I believed support for such issues would be bipartisan because everyone needs to combine work and family at some time during their lives.

In early January at the annual economics meetings I heard an interesting paper presentation (by Francine Blau and Larry Kahn) with the finding that about one-third of the lower labor force participation of women in the United States, compared with similar countries in Europe, is due to lesser assistance to women here around work and family issues. This is fairly convincing proof that the lack of paid family leave and other accommodations is holding back American women and U.S. economic growth.

Just back from standing on the mall with hundreds of thousands of enthusiastic Americans listening to President Obama’s second inaugural address, I was very pleased to hear the president mention the importance of equal pay for women and their families, specifically that “our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers, and daughters earn a living equal to their efforts.” His words reminded me that Senator Obama was one of about 13 senators who endorsed the proposed Fair Pay Act, which calls for comparable worth, or making sure that jobs typically done by women are not paid less because women do them.

The repetition throughout the speech of the phrase “we the people” and of the concept of the long “journey” we began at the founding of our nation to make our ideals real was galvanizing for those of us on the mall. His linking of Seneca Falls, Stonewall, and Selma in his cry for human dignity and justice was certainly the highlight of the speech for those around me.

The president touched upon so many issues of special importance to women, such as education and training, comprehensive immigration reform, the social safety net, and economic opportunity. Especially gratifying to my ears was his strong defense of “[t]he commitments we make to each other through Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security, these things do not sap our initiative. They strengthen us.”

And in his concluding call to action, the president noted that all of us “have the obligation to shape the debates of our time,” very much how I felt when establishing IWPR 25 years ago.

Please join us on May 1, 2013, for our anniversary celebration!
Paid Leave Convening  
(cont’d from p. 1)  
future work to address gaps in research on paid sick days. Participants discussed ways to capitalize on existing paid leave research and the resources available through the advocacy community’s network of organizations, coalitions, and partnering groups. Participants expressed particular interest in the overviews of new and forthcoming data sources on paid leave to be released by the U.S. Department of Labor: the American Time-Use Survey and the National Compensation Survey. Advocates shared lessons learned from both victories and defeats in paid sick days and paid family leave campaigns in New York City, North Carolina, Washington State, and Colorado.

IWPR continues to distribute research resources to meeting participants (including circulating research questions and new publications), to assist advocates in obtaining critical technical assistance for their work, and to convene the newly established network.

For photos from the convening, see p. 4.

For more information on IWPR’s work on paid sick days, please visit: http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/family-leave-paid-sick-days

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The Status of Women in North Carolina  

North Carolina Governor Beth Perdue presented IWPR’s findings on the status of women in North Carolina at a press briefing on October 11. The report reveals both areas of progress for women, such as education and employment, as well as areas where improvements are still needed, such as the pay gap.

SPSI Program Update  
(cont’d from p. 1)  
Senior Policy Analyst with the Center for Law and Social Policy, and Anne Mitchell, President of Early Childhood Policy Research.

The new toolkit is part of SPSI’s ongoing effort to highlight resources that are currently available to student parents—connecting research findings and helpful information with a network of school administrators, faculty, students, and other stakeholders. SPSI webinars are tools in communicating information to the nationwide SPSI network. Previously, a July webinar with more than 100 attendees discussed programs implementing grants through the Pregnancy Assistance Fund, established as part of the Affordable Care and Patient Protection Act.

Overall, SPSI’s mission is to conduct research, raise awareness, facilitate knowledge sharing, and improve public policies that will help student parents successfully complete postsecondary education.

Members of the SPSI team and affiliated researchers have also been presenting findings at events and conferences nationwide. Based on research from the IWPR report, Increasing Opportunities for Low-Income Women and Student Parents in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math at Community Colleges, President of the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity Mimi Lufkin presented at the October STEMe tech conference in Kansas City, Missouri. Lufkin spoke of gender trends in STEM programs of study at community colleges and promising approaches for increasing the promotion of women pursuing STEM majors, based on recommendations in the report. In addition, Tiffany Boiman, IWPR Senior Outreach and Policy Associate, gave the keynote address last summer at the Jeanette Rankin Scholarship Fund’s annual dinner in Athens, Georgia. The scholarship fund helps mature, low-income women complete their education.

For more information on joining the SPSI Information Network, please e-mail Tiffany Boiman at Boiman@iwpr.org. Also, visit the SPSI website at: www.studentparentsuccess.org
The District of Columbia passed the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act in 2008 with a provision requiring the city’s Auditor to prepare and submit a report on the act’s impact. In a briefing paper, IWPR made specific recommendations to the D.C. Auditor to enable the Auditor to meet and surpass the evaluation requirements. IWPR’s briefing paper calls for a complete picture of the law’s overall effects. D.C. is only the second city in the United States to have passed a paid sick days law, guaranteeing workers the right to earn paid time off to recover from illness or care for an ill family member. The D.C. Auditor’s report could serve as a model and case study for other jurisdictions currently considering paid sick days legislation. The evaluation will also help the District’s government reach informed conclusions about the law’s effects on businesses and workers.

By Claudia Williams

IWPR is pleased to announce that Rhiana Gunn-Wright (left), the Mariam K. Chamberlain fellow at IWPR since September 2011, has been named a 2013 Rhodes Scholar. These illustrious scholarships are awarded not only for academic excellence, but also for character, commitment to service, and potential for leadership. Starting at Oxford University in October 2013, Gunn-Wright plans to study comparative social policy. She aims to help improve social welfare policies in the future and hopes to find a position in government. “I want to design policies related to issues of poverty, welfare, and urban violence,” said Gunn-Wright.

Gunn-Wright graduated from Yale University magna cum laude with a double major in African American studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality studies. While at IWPR, Gunn-Wright has contributed to several research projects including the Student Parent Success Initiative and work on paid sick days. Gunn-Wright will leave IWPR with many valuable lessons as she takes the first steps towards what promises to be a very successful career in policy. “IWPR inspired me a lot,” said Gunn-Wright. “It was the first time I had seen the way policy gets made, hands on. More than anything I saw the effect of laws that really take into account people’s well being, and how trying to address their needs really does impact their lives.”

In her research, Gunn-Wright will continue to take a gendered perspective. “The research that I intend to do is going to look at welfare from an intersectional perspective, how welfare policies are designed to meet the needs of people who are at the intersections of multiple identities of the disadvantaged.”

“Gender will always be in my analysis,” said Gunn-Wright.
Informing Policies to Build Career and Immigration Pathways for In-Home Care Workers

By Cynthia Hess and Jane Henrici

The United States faces a growing care work crisis as the need for long-term assistance for the elderly and those with disabilities rapidly increases, while the care industry experiences a shortage of labor and high rates of turnover. These combined trends make it difficult to ensure the availability of quality care for seniors and future seniors. Two reports from IWPR, to be released in February, examine strategies to address the care work crisis, focusing on approaches that would benefit the industry as a whole.

Improving the quality of care work as it now exists in the United States requires improving circumstances for immigrant women who fill a substantial portion of in-home care jobs. Improving Career Opportunities and Conditions for Immigrant Women Home Care Workers explores promising education and training practices for immigrant women working in the home care industry (who may be employed without training or certification and without a high school diploma).

IWPR’s report finds that immigrant women working in the industry often need specific forms of training support, such as English-as-a-Second Language courses and affordable training in programs offering child care and transportation. These tailored training and education programs could also help improve the quality and continuity of care.

Immigrant care workers and the industry as a whole would benefit from more accessible training for home care workers and an improved career pathway system. At the same time, career pathway programs need to prepare women for employment positions of greater responsibility with better income.

The report recommends that an improved career pathway system should ensure that employers reward workers’ higher certification achievements with appropriately higher wages and benefits. The report describes existing models for training programs relevant to immigrant home care workers, both specific to the health care industry as well as those targeting non-medical personal care.

Increasing Pathways to Legal Admission for Immigrant In-Home Care Workers discusses ways to increase pathways to legal status for immigrant home care workers. Currently, undocumented immigrant women employed as care workers in the United States have few, if any, employment-based options for adjusting their immigration status. Women who live abroad also find it extremely difficult to obtain an employment-based visa to work in the U.S. home care industry.

Undocumented workers in this industry face multiple challenges, including vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. IWPR’s report suggests that increasing the pathways to legal status for immigrant care workers can address these challenges, as well as the industry’s growing labor shortage.

The report examines several strategies, including creating a new temporary special visa and implementing a “provisional” temporary visa that could transition to permanent if certain conditions are met. Another option explored is a system for state and the federal governments to collaborate in pinpointing labor shortages and allocate visas accordingly.

The report suggests that any reform of the visa system should be accompanied by policy changes to improve jobs for home care workers, through family-sustaining wages and good working conditions.

IWPR’s briefing paper, Recommendations for an Evaluation of the District of Columbia’s Paid Sick Days Law (published September 2012), suggests using both employer and employee surveys to assess awareness and implementation of the law, as well as to uncover any obstacles to compliance. The employer survey could help determine if employers implemented any changes in benefits or wages in order to comply, and if there are any staffing parents or effects on employee performance and morale.

The workers’ survey will help the Auditor to learn more of workers’ awareness of the law and access to paid sick days, changes in worker and family health outcomes (as well as work-life balance and stress) effects on employee performance (including presenteeism and morale), and any changes in other benefits or wages.

In September, The Washington Post reported on IWPR’s recommendations. According to the story, at least three independent assessments of the D.C. paid sick days law have been made by outside research groups, finding that most employers had not experienced negative consequences from the policy. The D.C. Auditor’s office plans to conduct its audit in 2013.

“Undocumented workers in this industry face multiple challenges, including vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.”

IUWPR Study Director Ariane Hegewisch and Dr. Anna Chapman from the Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law, University of Melbourne. Hegewisch visited Australia to research and present on work-family research.
Gender Wage Gap
The Wall Street Journal quoted IWPR President Heidi Hartmann on advances women have made in high-paying fields such as law and medicine (“Women Notch Progress,” December 4). The story was cited on The Atlantic blog (December 11) and the blog CNN in America (December 12).

The Christian Science Monitor quoted IWPR President Heidi Hartmann on progress still needed to close the wage gap (November 27).

Forbes Women quoted Heidi Hartmann on the economic effects of the wage gap (October 30).


Salon cited IWPR research on the wage gap showing that employment growth does not necessarily lead to its narrowing (“Mitt Romney is Wrong About the Wage Gap,” October 17).

USA Today cited IWPR research on the wage gap in a fact-check piece on the opening night speeches at the Democratic National Convention (September 4).

Women, Jobs, and the Economy

CNN Money quoted IWPR President Heidi Hartmann (“Women Are Back on the Job,” October 19).

Politico cited IWPR research on the economic status of single mothers (Oct. 16).


Bloomberg Businessweek cited IWPR analysis of women’s and men’s job gains during the recovery (“Women Failing to Get Hired in U.S. Seen in Childcare Woes,” September 6).

Paid Sick Days
The Baltimore Sun reported on IWPR’s findings on paid sick days in the Maryland region that forty percent of workers in the state’s private sector lack access to paid sick days (November 12).

The New York Times Economix blog (October 18) and The Miami Herald (October 19) cited IWPR research on paid sick days.

The Washington Examiner published an IWPR letter to the editor regarding paid sick days (October 9).

The Washington Post cited IWPR’s recommendations to the DC Auditor for his review and report on the DC paid sick days law (“DC Paid Sick Leave Law Should Be Audited,” September 24).

The New York Times Economix blog (October 18) cited IWPR research on paid sick days.

New America Media cited IWPR research on the number of personal care and service workers without paid sick days (September 5).

Retirement and Social Security
USA Today quoted IWPR President Heidi Hartmann on women and retirement (September 26).

The Status of Women
The ABC and the NBC local affiliate stations in Raleigh/Durham, NC covered the release of key findings from The Status of Women in North Carolina report. Gov. Beth Perdue spoke at the release.

The Status of Women in the Greensboro Metropolitan Area, North Carolina (November 2012, IWPR #R364)

The Status of Women in Guilford County, North Carolina (November 2012, IWPR #R363)

The Status of Women in the Asheville Metropolitan Area, North Carolina (October 2012, IWPR #R359)

The Status of Women in the Charlotte Metropolitan Area, North Carolina (October 2012, IWPR #R362)

The Status of Women in the Triangle Metropolitan Area, North Carolina (October 2012, IWPR #R358)

Quick Figures
Women Have Regained Greater Share of Jobs Lost in Recession Than Men: Women Gain 6 Out of 10 Jobs Added in November (December 2012 update, IWPR #Q008)
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