



better work, better life

Impact of the new 16-Week Maternity Leave Policy

With the announcement of the new 16-week Maternity Leave policy, there are mixed reactions in the workplace.

On one hand, mothers-to-be are delighted at the extended maternity leave. On the other hand, many are worried that their work will be piled up and colleagues will be reluctant to cover their duties. Some also shared that they may lose touch and have to build up the momentum after the four months break. Others were concerned that their performance bonus may be affected.

More than half of the companies surveyed observed an increase in the number of pregnancy cases over the past two years. This may be the result of increased benefits that the government is handing out to encourage Singaporeans to expand their family.

From an employer's perspective, there is a challenge to hire temporary or contract staff to cover the duties of the pregnant employee. More time will be needed to train and guide the newbie to minimise disruption at the workplace.

Employers also noticed that when staff are back from their maternity leave, they usually tend to be less committed at work as they will be worried and distracted about how their new born is doing. There is also a tendency to apply for leave more often to bring their baby for checkups.

One manager shared that if the temporary staff performs better than the staff who went on maternity leave, she will consider offering a full-time position to the temporary hire should the permanent staff not perform to her required expectations when she returns from her maternity leave.

90 percent of the companies do not intend to look into any pro-family programmes such as providing nursing rooms. One organisation mentioned that they will look into having flexible work arrangements to help staff to better integrate into their motherly roles.

For staff going on maternity leave, it is advisable to apply for maternity leave early. Explain to your superior that a proper handover will be done and try to clear your work and assign duties as early as possible. Be responsible and conscientious and do not perform any less just because you are pregnant. Employers can tell if there is a decrease in your work attitude and commitment. You certainly do not want to return to work only to realise that a temporary hire has replaced your job officially.