

Quality and cost-effectiveness in long-term care and dependency prevention



POLICY SUMMARY: GERMANY

The Care Leave Act (‘Pflegezeitgesetz’)

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Policy theme	Supporting unpaid carers
Design and implementation level	Design at National level, implementation at Federal level
Policy objective	To provide social protection and financial support for family caregivers to take leave from work
Start date – End date	2015 – ongoing

Aims

To provide increased social protection and financial support for family caregivers (defined more broadly) to take leave from work for acute, chronic, and end-of-life care. This includes: wage compensation (typically 90% of net earnings) for acute care leave of up to ten days and an interest free government loan made available for periods

of leave of up to 24 months; job security for family carers; leave for those providing care for minors living outside the home such as in institutional facilities is also available; and leave of up to three months for persons accompanying family members at the end of life (e.g. those in hospices).

Implementation

In effect since 1 January 2015. Previously family leave could be taken by written agreement between employer and employee; it can now be officially applied for as a legal right.

Target group

Unpaid caregivers of a close family relation, including step-parents, life-partners, and the siblings of spouses/life-partners, as well as the spouses/life-partners of siblings.

Eligibility criteria

Family caregivers can apply for short-term leave of up to ten days with financial compensation providing they do not otherwise receive a continuation of their salary, nor receive compensation at the same time for days off from work due to the sickness or accident of a child. This also applies to those employed part-time. The ten day care period is limited to one person and can be shared between several caregivers for a maximum period of ten days.

Care support money is not subject to any application deadline and is independent of the size of the employer.

For periods of leave exceeding 10 days, a maximum period of 24 months is covered by the law, but without wage compensation. Working hours may also be reduced (with a minimum reduction of 15 hours). In general, only employers having a minimum of 25 employees are obliged to comply with the law.

Resources

Funding: For acute care leaves of up to ten days, wage compensation (typically 90% of net earnings) is available by financing through the Social and Private LTC Insurance cover in the form of 'care support payments' ('Pflegeunterstützungsgeld') or financial support for leave exceeding a ten day period is not provided through the LTCI system. However, caregivers may apply directly for an interest-free loan from the German Ministry for Family and Civil Society (BAFzA), providing monthly payments covering half of the net earnings foregone due to reduced working hours.

Staffing: An Independent Committee for the Reconciliation of Care and Work ('unabhängige Beirat für die Vereinbarkeit von Pflege und Beruf') consisting of 21 members oversees the implementation of the law. The committee has representatives from professional interest groups and senior citizen organizations, as well as the social and private LTC insurance schemes. Other members are scientists and representatives from the Conference of Ministers and the Senators for Youth and Family and the Conference of Ministers and Senators for Employment and Social Engagement, as well as peak associations of the trades.

Performance assessment and monitoring

The Independent Committee for the Reconciliation of Care and Work ("Der unabhängige Beirat für die Vereinbarkeit von Pflege und Beruf") oversees (on a voluntary basis) the implementation of the law and is expected to report on its effects every four

years (first report forthcoming in 2019). The report will be presented to the Federal Ministry for Families and will serve as a position paper, as well as a source of recommendations for next steps concerning the further development of the law.

Evidence of success (outcomes, quality, satisfaction, awareness)

A first evaluation of the Care Leave Act is expected to be released by the Independent Committee for the Reconciliation of Care and Work in June 2019.

Transferability/ uniqueness.

n/a

Is this an emergent practice? (degree of innovation)

n/a

Sustainability

n/a

Critical Assessment

Academic literature on this action

Beden, M. (2015). Pflege von Angehörigen. In: *Bewegungstherapie und Gesundheitssport*, 32, 130–131.

Stüben, C. & Schwanenflügel, M. (2015). Vereinbarkeit von Familie, Pflege und Beruf: Die neuen gesetzlichen Regelungen als Unterstützung für Pflegebedürftige und Angehörige. In: *Gesundheits- und Sozialpolitik*, 69 (1), 76–79.

Documents

In German:

www.wege-zur-pflege.de/startseite.html

www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/familienpflegezeit--pflegende-an gehoerige-besser-unterstuetzen/78496

www.phvsda.de/files/news/Pflegezeitgesetz.pdf

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