



Parental Policy at Creel: Improvements to Promote Inclusion and Gender Equality in the Legal Sector

Mercedes Haddad and Valentina Villa, partner and counsel at Creel, Garcia-Cuellar, Aiza y Enriquez discuss the improvements made by the firm to its parental policies, in line with Creel's commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion, and the impressive results of these changes.

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Valentina Villa

At Creel, Garcia-Cuellar, Aiza y Enriquez we are committed to promoting a diverse, equal and inclusive workplace in order to secure the necessary environment for all our team members and stakeholders. This is a core part of our values, culture and institutional conviction.

One of the primary factors behind the inequality between men and women in the Mexican employment market is that culture has systematically appointed women as the primary caregiver in families.

As signatories of the UN's Global Compact, a pact to encourage businesses and firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on their implementation, and UN Women, a United Nations entity working for gender equality and the empowerment of women, we are committed to the protection of human rights, focusing our diversity, equity and inclusion strategy on gender equality and inclusion of LGBTQ+ community.

Parental leave inequality

One of the primary factors behind the inequality between men and women in the Mexican employment market is that culture has systematically appointed women as the primary caregiver in families. Our task force on diversity and inclusion identified this problem and determined that the length of parental leave for men and women is a key factor behind gender inequality. As per local law, men or secondary caregivers have five business days of paid parental leave, while women or primary caregivers have 12 weeks of paid parental leave and this gap impacts women's careers. Closing said gap, promoting and institutionalising the concept and uptake of shared-parenting responsibility, the implementation of programmes to ramp down and ramp up (prior to and upon return from parental leave, respectively), and flexible schedules are key to supporting gender equality and the balance of professional-personal life, both for primary and secondary caregivers.

Upon improving our Parental Policy, we also identified that current local law in Mexico only recognises the binary concept of maternity leave and paternity leave, leaving aside the rights of our LGBTQ+ community to recognition of their parental rights. We therefore revised our policy to recognise the parenting and paid leave rights of our LGBTQ+ community.

Actions taken by Creel

Some of the key steps taken by the firm are set out below.

Aware of the importance of the use of neutral and inclusive language, and the powerful message it sends out, our new parental policy refers to primary caregivers and secondary caregivers.

Creel increased paid paternity or secondary caregiver leave from 5 to 15 business days. Most importantly, we have established mechanisms, processes and programs to (i) ensure our male collaborators do indeed take their parental leave (which is a non-waiverable right), avoiding unbalanced leave that impacts our female attorneys' careers and (ii) promote shared parenting responsibility as well as positive forms of masculinity.

Creel increased paid maternity or primary caregiver leave from 12 to 14 weeks, beyond what local law establishes. We have adopted the recommendations of the International Labor Organization (ILO) as pointed out by UN Women's Women Empowerment Principles (WEPS) where light is shed on ILO's proposals on maternity leave best practices.

Aware of the importance of the use of neutral and inclusive language, and the powerful message it sends out, our new parental policy refers to primary and secondary caregivers.

Creel included a new concept in its parental leave policies: adoption paid leave rights to all our collaborators beyond what local law establishes, whereby the primary caregiver will have 45

The results

The changes made are deep and range from internal processes and policies to cultural advances. Not only did we revise our parental policy as per the recognised best practices of the ILO and UN Women, but it has also been our intention to improve our associates and collaborator’s experience in the different stages of their personal life. Therefore, we have added a toolkit to our support system to make these, usually hectic, processes as friendly as possible. We believe that by furthering our advances in diversity, equity, and inclusion we can make a long-lasting impact on both gender equality and the inclusion of our LGBTQ+ community, achieving not only inclusion but a true and sustainable sense of belonging.

We acknowledge there is still a path to be explored ahead of us to further our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

Post-pandemic lessons have shown us all that it is key to strengthen the efforts to balance professional and personal life. Flexibility has proven to work. Parents and new parents require access to flexible programmes to be able to achieve their maximum professional potential. The need to retain talent and recognition of the benefits of work-life balance have led us to establish a flexible hybrid form of work. We have created a new policy where our personnel can elect home office days and we have updated our dress code to recognise that results and excellence are not driven by a strict suit policy but by true talent and teamwork. We have certainly moved forward and recognised innovation is key to evolution. Diversity, equity and Inclusion practices allow us to do so.

All these efforts have led to an increased confidence and solidarity among our team and increased the pace at which we embrace diversity, equity and inclusion, which in turn promotes creativity, collaboration, the generation of new ideas and perspectives, and as a result makes us a better firm, for the benefit of our team, our clients, our stakeholders and our community.

We acknowledge there is still a path to be explored ahead of us to further our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and look forward to doing so with our stakeholders.

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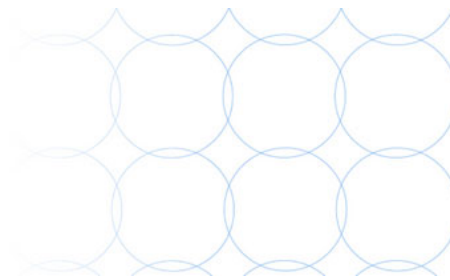
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