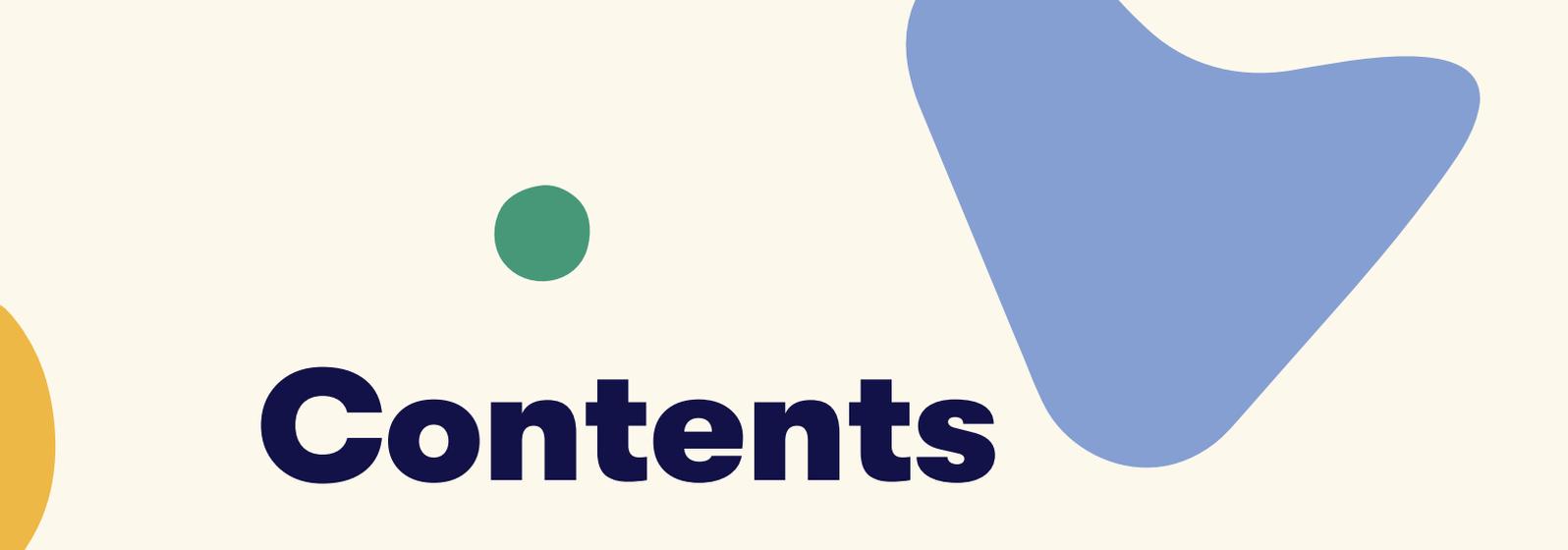A program led by

Parent Friendly

هيئـة أبوظـبي
للطفـولة المبكـرة
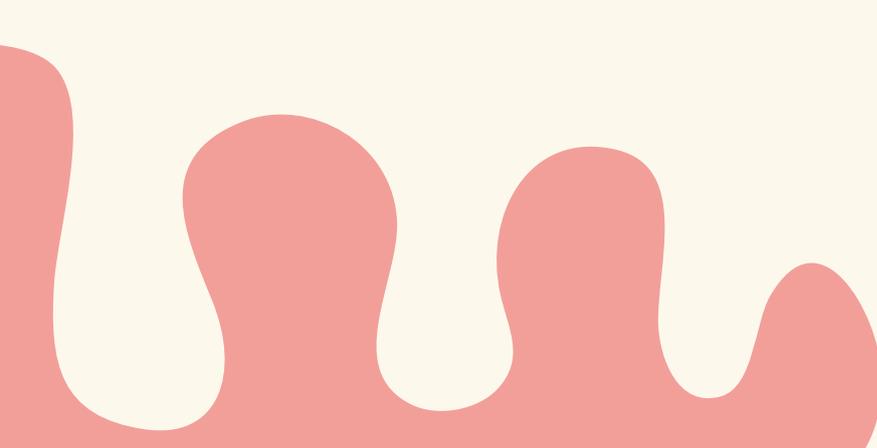**Abu Dhabi Early
Childhood Authority**

Applicant Handbook

Parent-friendly Label Cycle 4 - 2026
Semi-government, private and third sectors

Contents

01

About the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA)

The Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA) is a government entity dedicated to supporting the holistic development of children from birth to age 8. ECA oversees the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector in Abu Dhabi, ensuring that policies, services, and systems meet the highest standards and place young children at the center of all decision-making. More information is available at www.eca.gov.ae.

ECA plays five essential roles across the ecosystem:

Enabler

Strengthening partner capabilities to support children's development.

Policy Influencer

Driving evidence-based decision-making through research and data.

Knowledge Hub

Shaping and guiding the creation of ECD policies.

Impact Navigator

Monitoring sector progress and measuring community outcomes.

Incubator

Supporting the growth of innovative early childhood programs and services.

One of the most important things we can do as a society is to invest in our children early. This is why our primary focus is on children aged 0-8 years old. By 3 years of age, a child's brain is already more than 80% of adult size. By 5 years of age, it's grown to about 90% of adult size.

02

About the Parent-friendly Label™ (PFL)

The Parent-friendly Label™ (PFL) is a UAE-wide voluntary workplace award program that recognizes organizations for their commitment to creating supportive, parent-friendly environments. Earning the Label demonstrates that an organization understands the needs of working parents and has implemented meaningful policies that promote flexibility, wellbeing, and inclusive workplace culture.

Parent-friendly workplaces typically offer:

- Flexible working arrangements
- Adequate parental leave
- Return-to-work support for mothers and fathers
- Practices that promote compassion, balance, and family wellbeing

Applying for the PFL is an opportunity for organizations to reflect, grow, and strengthen their support for working parents. Regardless of the final outcome, every organization benefits from insights that encourage continuous improvement. Earning the Label marks the beginning of a longer-term journey toward sustaining and enhancing parent-friendly practices.

UNICEF Praises the Parent-friendly Label Program

In support of the Parent-friendly Label program, Eltayib Adam, UNICEF Representative to the Gulf Area, said

UNICEF is pleased to note the progress being made by Abu Dhabi's Early Childhood Authority (ECA) when it comes to family-friendly policies, in particular with the Parent-friendly Label. The aspiration to match the policies with internationally recognized standards and progressively work towards UNICEF's recommended best practices is praiseworthy.

03

Benefits of Parent-friendly Policies

Parent-friendly policies create meaningful advantages for employees, families, and organizations. Global research and PFL Cycle 3 data consistently show that when employers support working parents, the impact extends across wellbeing, productivity, retention, and child development

1. Improved Employee Retention

Global research consistently shows that flexibility is now one of the strongest predictors of employee retention.

The Microsoft Work Trend Index found that over **40%** of the global workforce is considering leaving their employer, with flexibility being one of the most influential factors behind this shift.

The same report found that more than **70%** of employees want flexible work options to continue — highlighting how deeply flexibility has become embedded in modern workplace expectations. [microsoft.com]

These findings mirror the insights from the PFL Second Impact Report, which shows that parent-friendly policies — particularly flexibility — play a central role in improving retention and sustaining employee engagement over the long term.

2. Stronger Employer Brand and Talent Attraction

Today's workforce expects organizations to actively support work–life balance and well-being.

Research shows that **87%** of employees expect support from their employer in achieving a healthy work–life balance. [peopleelement.com]

Workplaces that invest in employee well-being also benefit from stronger employer branding.

A People Element / Forbes-cited statistic shows that **89%** of employees at organizations that support well-being initiatives would recommend their company as a great place to work. [peopleelement.com]

These reputational advantages are echoed throughout the PFL program, where organizations implementing parent-friendly practices consistently report improved brand perception, stronger talent pipelines, and increased internal trust.

References (Corrected & Verified)
1. Microsoft (2021). The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work — Are We Ready? [microsoft.com]
https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work/
2. People Element / Forbes Data Compilation (2013–2019). Top 20 Employee Wellness Statistics. [peopleelement.com]
https://peopleelement.com/blog/top-20-employee-wellness-statistics/
3. HR Cloud (2025). 20 Employee Engagement Statistics You Need to Know (citing Gallup). [hrcloud.com]
https://www.hrcloud.com/blog/20-employee-engagement-statistics-you-need-to-know
4. Cisco (2022). Cisco Global Hybrid Work Study. [hrme.econo...atimes.com]
https://hrme.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/employee-experience/is-it-worth-it-the-middle-east-employees-have-a-new-work-equation/91826902

03

Benefits of Parent-friendly Policies

Many businesses have found that the adoption of parent-friendly policies and practices:

3. Higher Productivity and Performance

A highly engaged workforce directly contributes to organizational performance.

Gallup-cited research confirms that companies with high employee engagement achieve **21%** higher profitability. [hrcloud.com]

Parent-friendly workplaces support this outcome by reducing absenteeism, smoothing return-to-work transitions after parental leave, and increasing motivation — all of which align with productivity drivers highlighted in the PFL Second Impact Report.

4. Strong UAE Market Alignment

Local data indicates a high demand for workplace flexibility and wellbeing. Nearly **90%** of UAE-based employees prefer hybrid or fully remote work arrangements. PFL organizations in the UAE reflect this shift by prioritizing flexibility, parental support, and a people-first culture that resonates with the national workforce.

References (Corrected & Verified)
1. Microsoft (2021). The Next Great Disruption Is Hybrid Work — Are We Ready? [microsoft.com]
https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work/
2. People Element / Forbes Data Compilation (2013–2019). Top 20 Employee Wellness Statistics. [peopleelement.com]
https://peopleelement.com/blog/top-20-employee-wellness-statistics/
3. HR Cloud (2025). 20 Employee Engagement Statistics You Need to Know (citing Gallup). [hrcloud.com]
https://www.hrcloud.com/blog/20-employee-engagement-statistics-you-need-to-know
4. Cisco (2022). Cisco Global Hybrid Work Study. [hrme.econo...atimes.com]
https://hrme.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/employee-experience/is-it-worth-it-the-middle-east-employees-have-a-new-work-equation/91826902

03

Benefits of Parent-friendly Policies

Research suggests that parent-friendly policies and practices in the workplace can:

5. Reduced Parental Stress & Improved Family Wellbeing

Global evidence—including UNICEF's Family-Friendly Policies Handbook—shows that supportive workplace environments reduce parental stress and strengthen family wellbeing. PFL Cycle 3 findings mirror this trend, with employees reporting better work–life balance and smoother reintegration after leave, especially among working mothers.

Cycle 3 findings from the PFL 2nd Impact Report show the same results in the UAE:

• Parents report stronger work–life balance

• Working mothers experience smoother reintegration, supported by hybrid work pathways and nursing flexibility [glassdoor.com]

Paid leave is also shown to reduce financial strain associated with childbirth or adoption and lower relationship dissatisfaction during the early years of parenting.[2]

6. Improved Maternal and Infant Health

UNICEF highlights that providing mothers with workplace support to breastfeed — through protected breaks, lactation rooms, and flexible hours — leads to lower rates of infant illness and stronger immunity. [hbr.org]

This mirrors PFL Cycle 3 outcomes, where documented nursing support is increasingly built into HR policies. [glassdoor.com]

Extensive research also shows that:

• Breastfed infants experience lower infection rates and better long-term health[3]

• Women who breastfeed for 12 months experience reduced Type 2 diabetes risk and lower lifetime breast cancer incidence[4]

These insights strengthen the case for workplace breastfeeding support — a core PFL policy requirement.

1. UNICEF (2020). Family-Friendly Policies: Handbook for Business.
2. D'Inverno, R. et al. (2018). INSERT STUDY TITLE PROVIDED BY USER.
3. CNN (2015). "The benefits of paid leave for children are real, majority of research says."
4. Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer (2002); Ursin et al. (2004); Victora et al. (2016).
5. Månsdotter et al. (2006). INSERT STUDY TITLE PROVIDED BY USER.
6. U.S. Department of Labor (2016). Why Parental Leave For Fathers Is So Important For Working Families.
7. Jones & Wilcher (2019). Reducing maternal labor market detachment: A role for paid family leave.
8. Plotcka & Busch-Rossnagel (2018). The role of length of maternity leave in supporting mother–child interactions and attachment security among American mothers and their infants.

03

Benefits of Parent-friendly Policies

Research suggests that parent-friendly policies and practices in the workplace can:

7. Stronger Father Engagement and Family Stability

A landmark Swedish study found that fathers who took paternity leave early in their child's life had reduced mortality risk across the next two decades, attributed to deeper caregiving engagement and health-promoting behavior.[5]

The U.S. Department of Labor also reports that paternity leave improves bonding, enhances co-parenting, and strengthens family stability.[6]

PFL Cycle 3 results show similar cultural shifts in UAE workplaces:

*   74% of fathers were encouraged by managers to take paternity leave

*   73% felt peer support for taking leave [glassdoor.com]

This shift toward shared caregiving contributes to better developmental outcomes for young children.]

8. Better Early Childhood Outcomes

Paid parental leave and supportive workplace policies improve early child health, bonding, and emotional security. PFL now impacts 60,000+ children under age 8, directly contributing to better long-term developmental outcomes during the years when 90% of brain development occurs.[3]

This aligns directly with PFL impact data:

*   The program now impacts +60,000 children under age 8, the period when 90% of brain development occurs [glassdoor.com]

Workplaces that enable parents to be present during key early childhood moments are directly supporting stronger long-term developmental outcomes.

1. UNICEF (2020). Family-Friendly Policies: Handbook for Business.
2. D'Inverno, R. et al. (2018). INSERT STUDY TITLE PROVIDED BY USER.
3. CNN (2015). "The benefits of paid leave for children are real, majority of research says."
4. Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer (2002); Ursin et al. (2004); Victora et al. (2016).
5. Månsdotter et al. (2006). INSERT STUDY TITLE PROVIDED BY USER.
6. U.S. Department of Labor (2016). Why Parental Leave For Fathers Is So Important For Working Families.
7. Jones & Wilcher (2019). Reducing maternal labor market detachment: A role for paid family leave.
8. Plotcka & Busch-Rossnagel (2018). The role of length of maternity leave in supporting mother–child interactions and attachment security among American mothers and their infants.

03

Benefits of Parent-friendly Policies

Research suggests that parent-friendly policies and practices in the workplace can:

9. Enabling Women's Workforce Participation

Paid leave and strong return-to-work support significantly reduce the number of women leaving the workforce after childbirth. **PFL Cycle 3 data shows:**

82% of mothers felt supported taking full maternity leave

65% experienced smoother reintegration

These outcomes reflect PFL's commitment to gender equity and career continuity

1. UNICEF (2020). Family-Friendly Policies: Handbook for Business.
2. D'Inverno, R. et al. (2018). INSERT STUDY TITLE PROVIDED BY USER.
3. CNN (2015). "The benefits of paid leave for children are real, majority of research says."
4. Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer (2002); Ursin et al. (2004); Victora et al. (2016).
5. Månsdotter et al. (2006). INSERT STUDY TITLE PROVIDED BY USER.
6. U.S. Department of Labor (2016). Why Parental Leave For Fathers Is So Important For Working Families.
7. Jones & Wilcher (2019). Reducing maternal labor market detachment: A role for paid family leave.
8. Plotcka & Busch-Rossnagel (2018). The role of length of maternity leave in supporting mother–child interactions and attachment security among American mothers and their infants.

03

The Parent-friendly Label (PFL) consists of two levels of recognition

بيئة عمل داعمة للوالدين+

Parent Friendly بيئة عمل داعمة

Parent Friendly +

&

Level 1: Parent-friendly Label™

Workplaces in the UAE that exceed local requirements and standards.

Level 2: Parent-friendly Label+™

Workplaces in the UAE that meet or exceed global leading policies and practices.

Specific organizational targets have been defined for each level, and those for 'Parent-friendly+' are more comprehensive and ambitious.

Label Validity and Check-in Meeting with Assessors

Your Label will remain valid for two years, however, after 12 months of earning it, you will be invited to a check-in with the Assessors to better understand whether there have been any policy modifications or new additions since your organization earned the Label. This is intended to serve as a support for your organization as it endeavors to maintain and progress in its commitments to the Label.

The future of work is
Parent-friendly!

04

Benefits of Applying for the Parent-friendly Label™ (PFL)

Applying for the Parent-friendly Label™ offers organizations a meaningful opportunity to improve workplace culture, strengthen employee satisfaction, and advance long-term competitiveness. Evidence from Cycle 3 and global research demonstrates clear, measurable benefits.

Workplace impact

1. Enhanced Employee Wellbeing

When employees feel supported in balancing work and family responsibilities, stress decreases and wellbeing improves. Cycle 3 results highlight that 105,000 working parents, including 60,000 parents of children under 8, directly benefited from parent-friendly policies. These improvements align closely with the UAE's national goals for human development.

2. Higher Productivity

Contrary to outdated assumptions, parent-friendly policies enhance—not reduce—productivity.

Cycle 3 reported:

73% of fathers and

67% of mothers

experienced daily productivity increases in parent-friendly workplaces, supported by flexible models and structured leave systems.

3. Greater Employee Loyalty and Retention

Strong parent-friendly support builds trust, reduces turnover, and increases long-term loyalty.

77% of employees would recommend their employer as parent-friendly

68% say parent-friendly support influences their decision to stay beyond two years

This translates into more stable, engaged, and resilient teams.

4. Increased Employer Competitiveness

Organizations known for valuing parents stand out in the talent market and attract stronger candidates.

Cycle 3 alone reached 163,000 employees across 25 sectors, strengthening organizational reputation nationwide. PFL's cumulative global influence now exceeds 1 million employees, positioning it as a global benchmark in family-friendly workplace standards.

04

Additional Benefits for Label Earners

PFL Connect Community

Once your organization earns the Parent-friendly Label, you gain access to the PFL Connect Community—a series of curated virtual and in-person knowledge-sharing sessions. These gatherings bring together Label earners to learn from industry experts, exchange best practices, and discuss real-world challenges and success stories across sectors.

Feedback Report

All applicants—regardless of outcome—receive a customized Feedback Report outlining:

- Your assessment results
- Strengths and standout elements of your application
- Areas of opportunity
- Actionable recommendations from assessors

This report serves as a strategic tool to guide your organization's improvement journey, helping you strengthen your policies and plan for future PFL applications or upgrades.

Welcome Pack

Upon earning the Label, your organization receives a Welcome Pack that includes:

- A recognition plaque for display in your offices
- A leadership congratulatory letter acknowledging your achievement
- Brand guidelines and communication assets to help you celebrate the Label internally and externally
- Social media guidance and ready-made assets to support your engagement across digital channels

This pack equips your team to proudly share your accomplishment and integrate the Label into your internal culture and external communications.

Public Recognition

Label earners benefit from targeted outreach designed to recognize and amplify their efforts across media and ECA-owned digital channels. This visibility enhances your organization's reputation and highlights your commitment to supporting working parents.

Eligibility

To determine whether your organization is eligible to apply for the Parent-friendly Label™ (PFL), consider the following requirements:

Eligibility Checklist

Your organization is eligible if it meets all of the following criteria:

Sector ✓ Operates within the UAE's private, semi-government, or third sector.

Legal Status ✓ Holds a valid UAE trade license.

Commitment to Parent-friendliness ✓ Can demonstrate policies and practices that support working parents.

Operational Duration ✓ Has been in business for at least one year.

Employs at least 10 parents within the UAE. ✓ Does your organization employ in the UAE at least 10 parents?

If you answered **"YES"** to all these questions, then you are eligible to apply.

How Will My Organization Be Assessed?

The Parent-friendly Label™ assessment consists of two required components that together offer a comprehensive picture of your organization's parent-friendly policies and the lived experience of your employees:

1. Online Application Form (Mandatory)

The online form is the central assessment tool. It evaluates your organization against 19 criteria grouped into five categories.

- 8 criteria are mandatory and must all be met.
- The remaining 11 criteria are optional, and your organization must meet at least 6 of them to qualify.

In the application, you will be asked to:
- Describe your existing parent-friendly policies and practices
- Highlight unique elements that demonstrate your organization's commitment
- Provide evidence that brings your policies to life (e.g., policy documents, internal communications, photos, or other supporting materials)

Evidence is essential for assessors to understand how policies operate in practice across your organization.

2. Parent-friendly Experience Survey (Mandatory)

You will be responsible for distributing this survey to your employees.

Survey results help assess:
- How employees experience the organization's parent-friendly policies
- Whether policies are effectively implemented
- Areas where employee perceptions validate or highlight gaps in practice

Survey-based insights form a key part of the assessment. Components that rely on survey data are clearly highlighted in the criteria.

Assessment and Decision-Making Process

After you submit the application, evidence, and survey results, the full package undergoes an in-depth review. An independent judging panel—comprising representatives from leading public entities across the UAE—evaluates each submission.

Their role is to ensure:
- Fair and consistent evaluation
- Alignment with national standards
- Integrity and rigor in the assessment process

How Will My Organization Be Assessed?

How the Criteria Were Developed

The PFL criteria and targets were built through a rigorous, research-driven process that included:

1
Analysis of global research and data from leading institutions (e.g., OECD, ILO)

2
Review of family-friendly practices across 16 countries

3
Detailed benchmarking against 9 international award programs

4
Validation by UNICEF Gulf

5
Collaboration with UAE private-sector companies and experts to ensure local relevance and practical feasibility

06

The 19 criteria fall into five main categories

The Parent-friendly Label™ evaluation is built around 19 criteria organized into five main categories. These categories reflect the essential elements of a parent-friendly workplace and ensure that organizations provide meaningful, practical, and sustainable support to working parents

a Parental Leave

Organizations must offer dedicated leave and arrangements that support parents before, during, and after the birth or foster care of a child. The focus is on ensuring parents have sufficient time to heal, bond, and manage early caregiving responsibilities.

b Flexible Work

Organizations must empower employees to balance work and caregiving by offering flexibility in how work is organized, scheduled, and performed. This includes accommodating changing family needs and supporting different care arrangements.

c Family Care

This category evaluates whether the organization provides parents and families with targeted support across emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing dimensions, ensuring families feel supported through life's key stages.

d Family Wellbeing

This category examines whether the organization creates conditions that promote family wellbeing — including supportive programs, access to resources, and policies that reduce stress and foster balance across work and home life.

e Culture

To be truly sustainable, parent-friendly values must be embedded within the organization's culture. This includes leadership commitment, training, monitoring, and feedback mechanisms that ensure parent-friendly practices are applied consistently across the workplace.

06

Innovation

Applicants are encouraged to share details about how they have been innovative in the delivery of parent-friendly processes and supply supporting evidence. The more information provided, the better the evaluator will be able to assess the level of creativity applied.

When sharing your innovative solutions, please keep in mind how your organization has gone above and beyond to support parents and their children's needs: whether this was done through a policy, new programs or projects, onsite office changes, or other actions taken to enhance their experience.

Our expectation with the Parent-friendly Label is that applicants will make concrete policy changes within their organizations to meet or exceed the criteria.

Examples of innovative policies that some Label earners have in place:

1 Shared parental leave: the same amount of parental leave is offered to all parents, regardless if it's the mother or father.

2 Emergency family fund for vulnerable workers with families abroad: The funds come from a voluntary nominal contribution from office worker salaries (1 AED/month)

3 Special educational allowances: offered for parents caring for children of determination.

4 Remote work: Employees may work remotely from any location during the summer period (July and August).

5 Wellbeing support: Free ergonomic assessment offered for pregnant women to enhance their workspace, making sure it is adapted to their needs.

1. Assessment Criteria

'Yes' indicates that this component of the relevant criteria will be assessed. If 'NA', this component is not applicable to the assessment of that criteria. There are also areas where a numerical value has been added to be evaluated against when required.

The assessment of some components will be based on responses provided to a Parent-friendly Experience Survey which you are responsible for sharing with your employees. This is a mandatory component of your application. These areas have been indicated and highlighted when they are included.

a Parental Leave

A1. Maternity leave | **Mandatory**

Parental leave granted to women before and after the birth **OR** foster care of a child, to allow mothers to heal, nurture, care for and bond with their child.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Number of paid maternity leave calendar days offered	90 days or more	136 days or more
Flexibility in how maternity leave is taken (i.e. deferring leave days to later or spreading part-time over a longer period)	Yes	Yes
Option to take unpaid leave or use annual leave sequentially with paid maternity days	Yes	Yes
% of employees who agree that mothers are supported to take their full maternity leave benefit	60%	80%
% of new mothers who are satisfied with the number of maternity leave days offered	60%	80%
% of new mothers who feel supported by their manager to flexibly utilize their maternity leave benefit	60%	80%

A2. Paternity leave **Mandatory**

Parental leave granted to men before and after the birth **OR** foster care of a child, to allow fathers to nurture, care for and bond with their family.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Number of paid paternity leave working days offered	6 days or more	10 days or more
Flexibility in paternity days (deferring leave days to later or spreading part - time over a longer period)	Yes	Yes
Option to take unpaid leave or use annual leave sequentially with paid paternity days	NA	Yes
% of employees who agree that fathers are supported by their manager to take their full paternity leave benefit	60%	80%
% of new fathers who feel supported by their manager to utilize their paternity leave benefit flexibly	60%	80%
% of new fathers who feel supported to extend their paternity leave by using other types of leave, such as annual or unpaid leave	60%	80%

A3. Special parental leave **Optional**

Special leave provisions for prenatal **OR** foster care appointments, illness during pregnancy, miscarriage, stillbirth or loss.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Additional leave in the case of miscarriage (before 24 weeks) for all parents	2 weeks unpaid	2 weeks paid
Days of leave for male employees in cases of spouses' miscarriage before 24 weeks	NA	at least 3 days paid
Fully paid maternity leave in cases of stillbirth after 6 months	Entire maternity leave benefit (90 days)	Entire maternity leave benefit (136 days)
Offer fully paid paternity leave in cases of spouse stillbirth (pregnancy loss after 6 months)	Full paternity leave (6 working days)	Full paternity leave (at least 10 working days)
Additional maternity leave in cases of multiple births in a single pregnancy	Yes, unpaid	Yes, paid
Additional paternity leave in cases of multiple births in a single pregnancy	Yes, unpaid	Yes, paid

A4. Leave transition support   **Optional**

Employees are provided with support as they depart on, remain on and return from, extended parental leave through regular manager communication, transitional flexible work arrangements and re-integration programs.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Communications sent prior to and upon return from parental leave detailing support options to support transition back to work including	At least 2 forms of communications provided	At least 3 forms of communications provided
Option for employees to be invited to work events during parental leave	Yes	Yes
Availability of a formalized training / coaching / mentoring program for employees to support them before they take leave or upon their return	NA	Yes
Option for employees to have regular touch points with managers while on leave	NA	Yes
Option for transitional working arrangements upon employee's return to work	NA	Yes

A5. Employee benefits while on unpaid parental leave   **Optional**

Employee receives benefits while on unpaid leave such as continuity of their health insurance, ability to apply for roles to progress career, access to organizational communications, surveys and trainings, and inclusion in remuneration reviews, team events and activities.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Employee benefits are protected throughout the duration of parental leave	Access to at least 70% of employee benefits offered by the organization	Access to all employee benefits offered by the organization are provided

06

b Flexible Work

B1. Flexible work policy   **Mandatory**

If your organization is in the Education Sector (a university, educational operator, school or nursery) having a flexible work policy is OPTIONAL.

Policy which documents the organization's flexible working arrangements, including the types of flexibility available (e.g. hours, location, part time, job sharing). This policy places focus on output and outcomes achieved rather than set hours of work. Employees with access to this policy should include at a minimum those that are pregnant, returning from parental leave, or caring for a Child of Determination.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Documented flexible working policy which can be availed post alignment with line-manager	Yes	Yes
Flexible working policy provides flexible working hours and remote working, including additional flexible working options such as: job share, part time, annualized hours	Flexible working policy offers options for both flexible working hours (e.g., job share, part-time) and work location (e.g., remote, hybrid)	Flexible working policy offers options for both flexible working hours (e.g., job share, part-time) and work location (e.g., remote, hybrid)
Specific provision for parents to work flexibly to attend nursery or school events	Yes	Yes
Employees can attend antenatal or adoption appointments without taking leave	NA	Employees can take a minimum of 2 days of leave (separate from unpaid or annual leave) for antenatal or adoption appointments per year
Flexible work arrangements are embedded in employee contracts	NA	Yes
% employee satisfaction with flexible work arrangements	60%	80%
% employees who agree that flexible working is promoted, supported and role modeled at all levels	60%	80%
% employees who agree that they feel comfortable requesting their manager to work flexibly	60%	80%
% of employees who agree that flexible working policies is accessible to them through reaching an understanding with their manager, rather than needing their formal approval or going through a formal process	60%	80%

B2. Short term flexible work   **Optional**

Entitlement for employees to work remotely for short periods to accommodate caring responsibilities or care emergencies e.g. loss of childcare or childcare illness.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Short term flexible working practice in place for cases of childcare emergencies or childcare illness	Yes	Yes
Access to emergency medical leave days for childcare emergencies or hospitalization	NA	Yes
Employees (BOTH mothers and fathers) are offered additional flexible work arrangements in cases of births with pre-natal challenges or birth weight under 2,500 grams	NA	Additional flexible work arrangements OR additional leave (not sick or annual leave) are offered
% of employees with children who feel supported to work flexibly or take leave at short notice when they face last minute child-related emergencies, without having to consume annual/sick leave	60%	80%

B3. Flexible working job evaluation and progression   **Optional**

Employees working flexibly are able to progress in their careers, and organizational processes provide fair review of performance for those working flexibly.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Job evaluation guidelines customized for flexible working	Yes	Yes
Employees can challenge reviews on the basis that working flexibly negatively impacted their performance evaluation	NA	Yes
% of employees who agree that using flexible working can still advance their careers	60%	80%

06

C Family Care

C1. Nursing   **Mandatory**

Employees are able to take paid breaks from work to pump breastmilk or nurse their baby where applicable, and a private and hygienic maternity space with storage facilities, power, seating and baby change facilities is available. Extra support could include access to a lactation specialist, hospital-grade breast pumps, sanitation equipment, fresh towels, lockers, parenting books, wireless speaker, window access, WIFI and charging station.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Number of nursing break hours per day and the period for availing them, with access unaffected during reduced working hours (e.g., Ramadan)	At least 6 months if offering 2 hours of nursing breaks per day (Nursing break duration not to be impacted during periods of reduced hours such as Ramadan)	Policy does not limit for 6 months or more
Maternity room; a private and hygienic maternity room for female employees, where the mother is comfortable and can store milk Or Provide justification why no maternity space/room and suitable alternative (e.g. remote working options during nursing breaks)	A private and hygienic maternity room for female employees with appropriate seating and fridge (+ option for suitable alternative)	L1 + at least 3 "other amenities" (+ option for suitable alternative)
% of employees who agree that the work culture supports mothers to take their nursing break	60%	80%
% of new mothers who agree their organization clearly communicates the nursing support and facilities available to them (nursing hours, location, amenities, signage, etc.)	60%	80%
% of new mothers who are are able to use their nursing breaks flexibly	60%	80%
% of new mothers who are satisfied with the nursing support/facilities offered	60%	80%

* This criteria applies to organizations with a physical office space and who do not already offer flexibility of remote work to new mothers.

06

C2. Childcare **Optional**

If your organization is in the Education Sector (a university, educational operator, school or nursery) offering childcare is MANDATORY.

Employees are supported by their employers to access childcare support, including when childcare is not available, such as during school holidays.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Forms of childcare assistance e.g. direct financial support, vouchers, discounts, domestic helper training, domestic helper search, dedicated facilities (such as a kids' corner or onsite childcare that is compliant with all applicable regulations)	Availability of at least 1 form of childcare assistance	Availability of at least 3 forms of childcare assistance
% of employees who agree that the support that is offered in terms of childcare is clearly defined. (e.g. schooling allowance, child allowance, insurance, childcare discounts, etc.)	60%	80%
% of parents who feel that the childcare support provided fits their childcare needs as a parent. (e.g. schooling allowance, child allowance, insurance, childcare discounts, etc.)	60%	80%
% of parents who feel that their organization's family care benefit policies apply to all their children, regardless of how many they have (e.g., schooling allowance, child allowance, insurance, childcare discounts)	60%	80%

C3. Caregiver education **Optional**

Information and resources are made available for employees on relevant topics including babies, toddlers, children, and Children of Determination specifically.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Parenting education resources are offered (i.e. seminars on parent topics, educational materials, access to ECA's Parents' Platform)	At least 2 educational resource options	At least 3 educational resource options
Structured parenting training is offered (an example of this can be experts and facilitators providing on the ground training for expectant parents)	At least 1 parenting training option	At least 2 parenting training options
Targeted caregiver training that covers different caregiver and parenting styles for different needs is offered (example can be providing first-aid nanny training)	NA	Yes

C4. Child of Determination caregiver support **Optional**

Employees caring for a Child of Determination can access additional support and/or benefits through their employer.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Policy in place support to parents caring for Child of Determination, including additional 30 or more days of paid maternity leave and 30 days of unpaid maternity leave	30 or more days paid, 30 unpaid of additional maternity leave + 1 additional benefit	L1 + at least 2 additional benefits
% of employees who are carers of children of determination who agree that the support for them is clearly defined	60%	80%
% of employees who agree that support for parents caring for Children of Determination is sufficient	60%	80%
% of parents who feel the organization's benefits provided to child(ren) of determination fits their caregiving needs	60%	80%

06

d Family Wellbeing

D1. Employee wellbeing support   **Mandatory**

Programs and services available to promote the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of employees and their families.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Formalized wellbeing support for mental wellbeing including stress management support, mental health and counseling services	Formalized wellbeing support for mental and physical wellbeing as well as family activities	Availability of physical health targeted programs and family wellbeing activities and at least one type of mental health support (examples include stress management, mental health, post-natal depression support)
PRO/admin support is offered to new parents	Yes	Yes
Peer-led family support groups are available	NA	Yes
Formalized manager training and education in awareness and application of wellbeing support, such as first aid courses, CPR training, guide, or management training	NA	At least 2 options of manager wellbeing training
% of employees who agree that their organization clearly communicates programs and services that promote the mental and physical wellbeing of employees and their families	60%	80%
% of employees who are satisfied with the employee physical wellbeing support options offered	60%	80%
% of employees who are satisfied with the employee mental wellbeing support options offered	60%	80%

D2. Worker protection on parental leave   **Mandatory**

Employee rights are protected and cannot be undermined due to eligible parental leave or the utilization of nursing hours.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Protection from termination during pregnancy and parental leave	Protection during pregnancy and parental leave	Protection during pregnancy, parental leave AND may return to the same role or equivalent upon return
% of employees who feel protected while on parental leave, believing that their absence will not impact their role/position, their career at their organization or equivalent	60%	80%

D3. Women's leadership and career programs   **Optional**

Dedicated support is offered to women to advance in their careers given the specific challenges they often face in balancing family and work responsibilities.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Support programs for women's leadership advancement or career progression are available based on merit	Yes	Yes, and they address specific groups (i.e. mothers)
Structured support and mentorship networking opportunities	NA	Yes
% of employees who feel their organization understands the unique challenges women face in balancing work-family life and offers meaningful support to navigate them	60%	80%

06

e Culture

E1. Manager enablement and support **Mandatory**

Managers are knowledgeable of parent-friendly policies and implement them consistenly in line with the intention for which they were created. Employees feel comfortable and supported utilizing the parent-friendly policies that are available to them.

Enabling mangers could include different training methods, materials, sessions, being applied to managers to better understand the organization's existing parent-friendly policies, their importance, and how they can best support their teams to avail them and provide guidance as needed.

Internal promotion could be covered by the organization's internal platform where parent-friendly topics are discussed, e-mail communications, newsletters, SharePoint or equivalent with a specific area for parent-friendly policies, among others.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Training or awareness sessions are provided to managers periodically to enable them to implement parent-friendly policies and practices seamlessly	Parent-friendly training and awareness sessions are provided to managers periodically (at least 2 options selected)	L1+ more options selected
% of employees who agree that their manager is knowledgeable on parent-friendly policies (e.g. flexible work, parental leaves, etc.)	60%	80%
% of employees who agree that their manager is supportive of their caregiving responsibilities (childcare, elder care, dependent care)	60%	80%
% of employees who agree that their managers apply parent-friendly support consistently across the organization	60%	80%

E2. Internal promotion of parent-friendly policies **Mandatory**

Parent-friendly policies are documented and promoted within the organization to all employees.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Promotion of parent-friendly policies throughout organization, including ensuring they are easily accessed by employees	Yes	Yes
% of employees who agree that they understand the parent-friendly support options available to them	60%	80%
% of employees who agree that they know how and where to access information on parent-friendly support	60%	80%
% of employee who feel the organization actively encourages the use of parent-friendly support options	60%	80%

E3. Policy monitoring and impact **Optional**

Organizations review the utilization of parent-friendly policies, including identifying potential areas for improvement, and use that intelligence to inform policy changes.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Measures are in place and reviewed regularly to ensure that practices and promotions in place are delivering parent-friendly outcomes	At least 2 parent-friendly related measures are tracked	L1 + 1 additional parent-friendly related measure is tracked
Organizations take action to update policies in line with the outcomes of the policy reviews	NA	Yes
% of employees who are satisfied with the parent-friendly support provided by their organization and believe it reflects an understanding of employee needs and priorities	60%	80%

E4. Employee listening and impact   **Optional**

Organizations can illustrate that they have collected feedback from employees on parent-friendly policies, have introduced creative solutions to meet employee needs, and can demonstrate with data the impact of these initiatives.

Components of measurement	Parent-friendly	Parent-friendly+
Organizations can demonstrate that they have a mechanism in place to collect employee feedback and ideas on parent-friendly policies	Yes	Yes
There is a structured process and governance in place by which employee feedback is reviewed, piloted, tested and implemented	NA	Yes
The impact of improvements in policy can be demonstrated through data analysis	NA	Yes
% of employees who agree they can provide feedback on parent-friendly support at their workplace	60%	80%
% of employees who feel that their feedback will be taken seriously	60%	80%
% of employees who feel that they are able to provide feedback on how their manager applies parent-friendly policies	60%	80%
% of employees who feel comfortable to provide feedback on how their manager applies parent-friendly policies	60%	80%

06

2. The Parent-friendly Experience Survey

As a **mandatory part of your application**, you will be required to share a brief Parent-friendly Experience Survey with your employees. These questions were designed to specifically assess how employees view current parent-friendly practices within their own organization. Employee responses to the survey will be anonymous and will be collected and analyzed by an independent third party to prevent bias and maintain privacy.

The Parent-friendly Experience Survey response rate is **based on the size of your organization** (total number of employees in the UAE), ensuring the right coverage of employee participation based on statistical best practices. Throughout your application journey, we aim to support you.

The Applicant Journey

**Interested in joining the parent-friendly community?
Here's what you need to know!**

I learn about the Parent-friendly Label™ and download the Applicant Handbook from the PFL website on Parentfriendlylabel.ae

I apply through the website. I distribute the Parent-friendly Experience Survey to my employees.

I meet with my evaluator for a Clarification Session, as needed.

I am notified about my label status once the Evaluation Process is complete, around Q1 2027.

ECA supports me to continuously improve my policies and I create a Progression Plan.

I become part of the PFL Connect Community (knowlege sharing).

I maintain my label status for 2 years. In the first year, I have a check-in meeting with the Asessors.

Journey Checklist

All Applicants:

Anytime

☐ Visit the PFL Website to learn more about the Parent-friendly Label and become familiar with the criteria

☐ Download and read the Applicant Handbook. Attend a PFL Awareness Webinar and/or reach out to the PFL Team at pfl@eca.gov.ae with all your questions

☐ Conduct an internal assessment of your organization's policies & action any improvements where needed

Feb 2 - July 31 2026

☐ Start your organization's PFL Application form online. Your progress is autosaved, so take your time and be thorough in your responses

☐ Receive an automated email with your organization's sample size requirement for the Parent-friendly Experience Survey and circulate the survey to your employees. Please remember to allow at least one month to reach your required sample size

☐ Ensure your evidence is all up-to-date and reflects everything you want to share about your organization's policies and innovation. Finalize and submit the online Application Form before the deadline

July 2026 onwards

☐ Attend the Clarification Session, if needed. An email with be sent to you with details, including what to prepare; if you do not attend this session, the assessors will proceed with assessing your application as-is

Early Q1 2027

☐ Receive the decision regarding your organization's application along with your Feedback Report

☐ Attend the Feedback Session with the assessors

☐ Establish your Progression Plan using feedback from the Feedback Report and secure endorsement from your management to make the necessary changes.

07

If you have earned the Parent-friendly Label then:

- ☐ Attend the Recognition Ceremony

- ☐ Receive your Parent-friendly Label™ Welcome Pack (which includes a plaque for display in your offices and a congratulatory letter from Leadership acknowledging your organization's achievement, PFL brand guidelines and collaterals which Label earners may produce to be able to share pride in earning the Label with their employees, as well as social media guidelines and recommendations of posts (assets) to support you in your engagement across social media channels)

- ☐ Share the good news with your employees and help foster a sense of workplace pride in the achievement by distributing PFL-branded collaterals

- ☐ Collaborate with ECA on how to share your story and promote your organization's achievement (through communication features, etc.)

- ☐ Engage with PFL on social media as per suggestions provided in your Welcome Pack and actively participate in the PFL Connect sessions curated for you

- ☐ Attend the 1-year Check-In Meeting to share your organization's achievements since earning the Label

If you have not earned the Parent-friendly Label then:

- ☐ Focus on achieving milestones from your Progression Plan

- ☐ Keep all policy updates and improvements well-documented

- ☐ Engage with the Parent-friendly Label on social media to stay updated on the latest news and events

- ☐ Apply to earn the Parent-friendly Label once the new application window opens

*If your organization should encounter any issues in completing any step of this process for any reason, please make sure to inform the PFL Team immediately by emailing us at pfl@eca.gov.ae or by calling us at +971 56 533 7474 or +971 56 686 6658.

08

Quality Assurance

To ensure the credibility and integrity of the Parent-friendly Label™ (PFL), a series of checks and balances for quality assurance and control have been put in place throughout the assessment process.

Selection

Application assessment will be conducted by a professional vendor with a trusted reputation and extensive experience to ensure complete fairness and integrity throughout the assessment process. ECA and its personnel will not be directly involved at any stage of the assessment process.

Benefits

Applicants who have not yet achieved the Parent-friendly Label™ will also have the opportunity to receive feedback in order to better understand the results of their application and how they can improve for the next cycle if they wish to re-apply.

The purpose of the Parent-friendly Label™ is to encourage and reward the adoption of parent-friendly policies and practices across workplaces in the private, semi-government and third sectors in the UAE. ECA recognizes, however, that a conflict of interest could potentially arise when entering a professional relationship in the course of business activities with organizations who may choose to apply to the Label.

In order to ensure the neutrality and independence of the selection of Parent-friendly Label™ applicants and avoidance of undue influence, ECA has implemented the following to retain the integrity of the Label:

1. Contracted a third-party evaluation firm with a strong reputation of ensuring independence to conduct the assessment and analysis of all submitted applications

2. Included as part of the Parent-friendly Label™ recipient selection process, a Judging Panel made up of independent senior stakeholders from leading public institutions across the UAE, who will be reviewing and recommending the list of successful applicants

3. If any applicant organization has an existing relationship or is collaborating with ECA, then this will be disclosed to the Judging Panel

09

Notification to ECA of Changes

Organizations are responsible for notifying the ECA of all significant changes that impact their implementation of the PFL criteria within 90 days of their occurrence. Significant changes include, but are not limited to, those listed below.

Focal Points

If the change relates to the organization's focal point, please inform the ECA immediately of the new focal point's name, title and contact details.

Leadership

If the change relates to the organization's leadership, please inform the ECA immediately of the new leader's name, title and contact details.

Ownership Changes

ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE LABEL – The new owner must sign and submit a letter of intent signifying the organization's intent to continue to pursue the Parent-friendly Label™.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE EARNED THE LABEL – The new owner must send ECA a signed letter reporting the new ownership. The letter must state either the organization's current implementation of the Label criteria will not be impacted and why, or the organization's current implementation of the Label criteria will be impacted and what plans the organization has to ensure that all requirements will continue to be met.

Organization Mergers

The organization must send a letter signed by the CEO describing the changes. The letter must state either the organization's current implementation of the Label criteria will not be impacted and why, or the organization's current implementation of the Label criteria will be impacted and what plans the organization has to ensure that all requirements will continue to be met.

In addition, if the merger results in more than one organization, only the organization that applied for the Label and underwent an assessment may claim Parent-friendly Label™ designation. In order for the new organization to claim Parent-friendly Label™ designation, it must apply for the Parent-friendly Label™ separately.

10

Confidentiality

All data and information submitted by applicants will be **used exclusively for the purposes of assessing their application for the Parent-friendly Label™ (PFL)**, and individual responses will not be shared with third parties outside of the evaluation parameters. This extends to ECA's selected evaluation vendor, ensuring a fair application assessment.

PFL earners will be announced publicly, but the individual policies and practices or other organization-specific data shared as part of the application process will not be shared **without written consent and authorization from the organization.**

Data may be anonymized and aggregated for the purposes of understanding overall trends, and general aggregated data about applicants and the assessment process may also be used in communications by ECA. Organizations may also self-disclose their own individual data in any of their communications should they wish to do so.

Our applicants' privacy is of paramount importance for us. If you would feel more comfortable sharing data with an NDA in place, this can be provided upon request.

Contact Details

Do you have any additional questions?
You can always reach out to our team and we will get back to you!

E-mail: **pfl@eca.gov.ae**

Phone: **Abu Dhabi Government Contact Center (800-555) or
PFL Team (+971 56 533 7474) (+971 56 686 6658)**

Parentfriendlylabel.ae

You can also check out our Parentfriendlylabel.ae
for more information.

PFL_UAE