

Expectant and new parents guide

Stage 2 – Becoming a parent



How exciting! Your baby or child has arrived and is being welcomed into your family and community.

Becoming a parent is a major life changing event and you should give yourself time to adjust.

However, it can be helpful to stay connected with work in a way that best suits you.

This section of the guide provides you with information to traverse this new chapter of your life and will aid your transition back to the workplace.

Acknowledgment of Country

ACU acknowledges and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways. We recognise their spiritual and ongoing cultural connection to Country. We respectfully acknowledge Elders past and present and thank them for their wisdom and guidance as we walk in their footsteps.

A Prayer for Parents

Loving God,
You are the giver of all we possess, the source of all of our blessings.
We thank and praise you.

Thank you for the gift of children.

Help us to set boundaries for them,
and yet encourage them to explore.
Give us the strength and courage to treat each day as a fresh start.

May our children come to know you, the one true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

May your Holy Spirit help them to grow in faith, hope, and love,
so they may know peace, truth, and goodness.

May their ears hear your voice,
May their eyes see your presence in all things.
May their lips proclaim your word.
May their hearts be your dwelling place.
May their hands do works for charity.
May their feet walk in the way of Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord.

Amen.

During parental leave

There is a lot happening at this stage of your parenting journey, and you should give yourself time to settle into your new routine and enjoy this time with your baby or child. This section provides you with some practical information to assist you with being a new parent and support your transition back into the workplace.

Caring for baby or child

Several external organisations offer information, support and guidance for new parents on breastfeeding and feeding, sleeping and playtime routines. Here's some to get you started:

- [Tresillian](#): Parenting advice and support on breastfeeding, sleeping and settling, post-natal depression and nutrition.
- [Karitane](#): Parenting advice and support on breastfeeding, routines, sleeping and settling, development, adjusting to parenthood.
- [Raising Children Network](#): Parenting website has resources and videos on breastfeeding, bottle feeding, behaviours, sleeping and settling, safety, premature and sick babies, play and learning.

Staff tip: Remember to look after your own health and wellbeing – get some sleep, eat well, take a break, go for a walk. It may feel like a 24-hour cycle at first, but it won't be for too much longer. Speak to your GP or health practitioner if you have any concerns.

If you feel overwhelmed

Your life has changed and for some new parents in ways they weren't prepared for. This can impact your physical and/or mental wellbeing. Remember you aren't alone, and help is available. Options for support you may consider include:

- Your family and friends – reach out and speak with them about what you need or how you are feeling.
- Your GP or other health professional.
- Acacia EAP provided by ACU – three free confidential sessions are available to you and your immediate family to use ([Acacia EAP](#) | [Perinatal Mental Health](#)).
- [Health Direct](#) – offering free health advice, health information, and the location of hospital and health service providers.

Keeping in touch days

Time off from work may pass quickly and before you know it, you are due to return back to work. Parents can find the transition back to work much easier when they stay connected to the workplace.

Keeping in contact with your supervisor and work in general while on parental leave through emails, calls or visits is encouraged and the timing and frequency is up to you. This includes deciding whether you will be checking your work emails for part or all of the parental leave period. You and your supervisor can agree to a regular time each month (for example) for a phone call or coffee catchup or agreeing to important work information to be emailed to your personal email address (if you are not viewing work emails). Where you have agreed on a contact plan before the baby or child arrives, this can be adjusted if needed.

You have the option to access 10 paid 'keeping in touch' days as outlined in the [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#) and [Fair Work Act 2009](#). Keeping in touch days provide the opportunity to stay connected to the workplace by:

- maintaining contact with your supervisor and colleagues
- refreshing skills, attend training or professional development
- keeping up to date with organisational updates or team changes
- undertake discrete work activities
- participating in team planning events or conferences prior to your official return to work.

Additional benefits to you include remaining connected with your professional networks and the life you had prior to baby or child arriving, limiting the potential of feeling isolated at home, and assisting with the transition to work.

Eligible staff (continuing and fixed term) can decide to use the keeping in touch days from the date of the birth, adoption or permanent placement of your baby or child for a period of up to 24 months but not before at least 14 days after the birth, adoption or placement date. Keeping in touch days are taken as a full day (seven hours) and paid at your normal rate of salary. Your supervisor can lodge an application for payment of this day, as a general enquiry through Service Central. For more details about keeping in touch days refer to [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#).

Supervisor tips: You will need to submit the keeping in touch leave day through a Service Central (general) request for payment. Payment is to be made at the staff member's nominal salary and for a full day (seven hours). A total of 10 days may be submitted, for a period of up to 24-months from the date of birth, adoption or placement.

If you and your staff member have agreed to stay connected, remember to set up regular contact times with the staff member. It is your responsibility to keep them informed of significant workplace announcements (eg. change plans, changes in work distribution, whole-of-team development or training required for the job).

Change in circumstances

Sometimes we may need to vary the leave application submitted. In these situations, you are encouraged to contact your supervisor as soon as practicable (or at least four weeks prior to the planned return to work date) to discuss the change in circumstances so that it can be approved ahead of time.

The change in circumstances may include:

- Varying the return to work date: where an earlier date is being sought, this should be put in writing after discussion with your supervisor to allow approval and adjustment to any backfill arrangements that may be in place.
- Extending parental or other leave: an application should be submitted in [Staff Connect](#) after discussion with your supervisor. Refer to 'Leave offerings' on page 8 of this guide. Remember - you will accrue annual and long service leave, where you are entitled to it, during parental leave.
- Request to vary working hours: if you plan to request a change to working hours or fraction (temporary or permanent) that is different to your substantive work arrangements, a discussion with your supervisor will need to occur in the first instance. Your supervisor will consider the request against the operational needs of the workplace, and approvals will be required. Refer to page 22 of the full guide for more details.
- Flexible Work Arrangement - refer to page 22 of the full guide for more details.

Staff tip: If you require more information, log a [Service Central](#) general request or phone (07) 3623 7272. If leave is being extended, check your leave balances by running a leave calculation prediction in [Staff Connect](#).

Supervisor tip: You need to reasonably consider any flexible work request following parental leave as the staff member now has family/ carers responsibilities and has a right to request flexible work under the Fair Work Act National Employment Standards. If you have any concerns or questions, contact [Service Central](#) to seek advice **before** finalising any decision.

Registering birth and government Medicare

A gentle reminder to [register baby's birth](#) so you can apply for a baby certificate and government financial assistance (parental leave, dad and partner pay, and newborn supplement). You would have received this information in your birth hospital parent pack. For registration associated with adoption or permanent placement, speak with your service provider.

Baby or child will need to be enrolled with Medicare as soon as possible. Visit [Medicare](#) for further information.

External resources for Stage 2

- [Australian Breastfeeding Association](#) | [Tresillian](#) | [Karitane](#): Parenting advice and support on breastfeeding, sleeping and settling, post-natal depression, nutrition and more.
- [Raising Children Network](#): Parenting site advising on breast and bottle feeding, behaviours, sleeping and settling, safety, premature and sick babies, play and learning;

through pregnancy to teens, adoption and support for parents with children living with autism or a disability.

- ACU's [Acacia EAP](#): Three free confidential sessions for you and your immediate family.
- [Health Direct](#): Offering free health advice, health information, and the location of hospital and health service providers.
- [Single Parenting](#) through pregnancy, birth and baby.
- [BabyCenter](#): Community based, resources on all these associated with parenthood.
- CatholicCare/ CentreCare: Loving care to all members of community. Locations: [Ballarat Diocese](#) | [Brisbane Diocese](#) | [Canberra Archdiocese](#) | [Melbourne Archdiocese](#) | [Parramatta Diocese](#) | [Sydney Archdiocese](#)
- [LGBTQIA+](#) and [Rainbow Families](#): Supporting our LGBTQ+ parents and their children.
- [First Nations](#) and [Indigenous.gov.au](#): Supporting First Nations mothers and babies.
- [Parenting with a disability](#)
- [Kidsafe](#): 24-hour line with registered nurses providing advice.
- [Raising kids](#): Australian Government Services Australia site offering payment and services information, to help with the cost of raising a child.
- [MensLine Australia](#) free telephone and online counselling.
- [BeyondBlue](#): Helping and assisting on one's mental journey.
- Parentline across the country: [NSW](#), [Qld and NT](#), [Vic](#), [ACT](#).
- [PANDA](#): Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia offers support for expecting parents through to growing families.

Stage 2: Becoming a parent – staff checklist

Print out and tick (if needed) to plan your way through Stage 2

- I've made contact with my supervisor
- For eligible staff* - I know how to access and use the 10 keeping in touch days
- If needed* - I know who to contact for additional support (refer to the list of external organisations on page 16 of this guide)
- Undertake a leave calculation prediction in Staff Connect to know my leave entitlements and balances
- Do I need to discuss my return to work options with my supervisor for a change in work arrangements, work pattern, leave dates, or return to work date before submitting the written request or form for approval?
- Apply for any government assistance that is available to me, as listed on pages 10 and 16 of the full guide
- Register baby's birth and enrol in Medicare
- If needed* - I know what support services I can access
- If needed* - Contact Service Central or log a request for more information

Stage 2: Becoming a parent - supervisor checklist

Print out and tick (as needed) for a discussion with your staff member during Stage 2

- The staff member shared their news (eg. baby has been born); check they are comfortable with you sharing this news with the team including photos
- Keeping in touch days: work with the staff member to schedule the 10 days and submit a Service Central request to have the days paid
- If communication and contact was agreed, set up regular dates/ times to catch up with the staff member through their leave (ie. a call, email, coffee catchup, inviting them onsite to attend a team lunch or morning tea)
- Communicate with the staff member about important organization wide or team announcements (such as change plans or a redirection of work priorities)
- Be familiar with [ACU Parental Leave Policy](#), [ACU Personal Leave Policy](#) and [ACU Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#). Staff member may request a provision associated with their family responsibilities (*contact People and Capability Business Partner or HR Services for advice*)
- Consider any reasonable request from the staff member to change a return to work date or extend parental leave
- Keep a calendar record of the return to work date, and one month prior commence return to work discussions and preparation

