

# Roberta Kowald

---

WA | 360-932-8218 | [rlgkowald@gmail.com](mailto:rlgkowald@gmail.com)

## Public Policy Memo: Evergreen State College: Master of Public Administration Application 2023

### Removing Current Barriers within the WA State Paid Family & Medical Leave Program for Adoptive families

Currently there is a barrier for people seeking access to Paid Family and Medical leave in WA State when trying to receive leave benefits for bonding with a child in the case of adoption versus when the child was first placed in the home.

“Family leave” is currently defined for families with new children in the home as allowing for time “to bond with the employee’s child during the first twelve months after the child’s birth, or the first twelve months after the placement of a child” The entitlement to family leave for bonding expires at the end of the “twelve-month period beginning on the date of such birth or placement.”

Due to the current law, adopting parents face barriers to accessing family leave for bonding due to the twelve-month expiration of their entitlement. Adoptions do not typically take place within twelve months of the initial placement of a child in a home and take, on average, 12 to 18 months after the vacation of the birth parent’s parental rights. This barrier created in law of the entitlement expiration prevents some adopting parents from accessing family bonding leave.

Addressing this barrier for adopting & fostering families is directly tied to the paid Family and Medical Leave and Employment Security Department’s goal of: *People receive accessible, safe, and equitable services at the right time, in the way they need it.*

We have heard about this barrier from numerous parents and stakeholders and want to ensure that we are improving equitable outcomes for families as we continue to learn more, and our statewide PFML program matures.