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## Firms here make family-friendly list

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Four law firms with Chicago offices are among the most family-friendly firms in the nation, according to the Yale Law Women.

Making the group's fourth annual Top Ten Family Friendly Firms List released Thursday were Jenner & Block LLP; Katten, Muchin, Rosenman LLP; Mayer, Brown LLP, and Sidley, Austin LLP.

The list is derived from a survey conducted by the Yale Law Women, a student organization that promotes the interests of women in law school and the profession. The survey was e-mailed this spring to all of the firms on the 2008 Vault Top 100 Law Firms list and sought information on the percentage of female attorneys in various positions, maternity and paternity leave policy and use, and the availability of child care and alternative work schedules.

Survey results show that while these law firms appear to be making more efforts to provide family-friendly policies, they continue to lag behind when it comes to the disparity between male and female partners.

According to the study, women represent an average of 45 percent of associates at the firms, but account for 16 percent of the partners.

This finding is something third-year Yale law student Lauren Gerber, who served as co-chair of the project, said is still disappointing and shows there is much room for improvement.

But the survey also shows that, of the partners promoted in 2008, about 23 percent were women. It also revealed that more female attorneys received bonuses in 2008 than men, at 55 percent and 45 percent, respectively.

Mary B. Richardson-Lowry, a partner at

Mayer, Brown in Chicago who chairs the firm's diversity and inclusion committee, said that, as of April, 48 percent of the associates were female, as were 16 percent of the partners.

"It's never ideal ... and that's a clear message that every firm has to look at whether or not they have the proper policies in place," Richardson-Lowry said, adding that one of the reasons she believes her firm made the top 10 list has to do with its paternal leave policy.

She said Mayer, Brown offers new mothers 18 weeks of maternity leave and fathers six weeks. According to the study, Mayer, Brown is among the 63 percent of firms that offer more than 16 weeks of leave. The average parental leave for women is 15 weeks and six weeks for men.

The survey also revealed that more than 90 percent of women used the maximum leave offered, while just more than half of the men used the maximum allowed. Gerber said this finding shows that there is a need for gender neutrality. About 60 percent of firms use gender-neutral terms in their parental leave policies.

Richardson-Lowry added that she believes Mayer, Brown stands out for offering up to six weeks of paid leave for lawyers who are the primary care giver for their elderly parents. Providing an option like this is "one way we retain the best and the brightest."

Deirdre Connell, a partner with Jenner & Block's New York office, said her firm continues to focus on retaining female attorneys, but also works to provide policies that make it one of the most family-friendly firms. One example, Connell said, is the firm's flexibility in offering part-time work. The mother of three who is among the 20

percent of partners who are female, said Jenner & Block does not have a set policy, but looks at situations on an individual basis.

According to the study, 100 percent of the firms surveyed offer some sort of part-time option, with 55 percent granting such requests on a case-by-case basis. In addition, about 25 percent of law firms offer a formal "off ramp/on ramp" program, which allows attorneys to leave the firm for a year to be with family, and then return.

The survey also points to some of what it terms the more innovative approaches that law firms are taking to promote family-friendly policies. One is appointing a partner to oversee the part-time programs to make sure those attorneys are effectively handling their alternative schedules. Others include offering on-site child care for new parents and the option to work part time when returning from parental leave.

Gerber, who assisted in conducting the survey, would not release the specific number of firms that responded to the survey, but said "we had a very good response rate and feel comfortable publishing a top 10 list."

She said the survey was weighted based on a survey of priorities that was sent to more than 1,000 Yale Law School alumni. And, unlike in previous years, the group did not specifically rank the firms within the top 10 list.

The Yale women's organization, Gerber said, hopes that firms will look at the survey and develop more flexible work arrangements so their attorneys — men and women alike — can have a better balance of life and work.

To see what other firms made the top 10 list and to view survey results, visit [www.law.yale.edu/stuorgs/ylw.htm](http://www.law.yale.edu/stuorgs/ylw.htm).