

Caregiver Guide for Employers
How to Support Employees with
Caregiving Responsibilities



“There are only four kinds of people in this world:

Those who have been caregivers

Those who currently are caregivers

Those who will be caregivers

Those who will need caregivers”

-Rosalynn Carter



In the 1980s, American employers adapted their human resource policies to accommodate the needs of workers with young children. Now, employers and workers face another challenge: providing care for an older parent, relative, spouse or friend. It is

estimated that one in six Americans who work full or part-time assist with the care of an elderly or disabled adult family member, relative or friend. Caregivers do not abandon their caregiving responsibilities because of work. Instead, caregivers cope the best they can to balance their often conflicting sets of responsibilities.

“Replacing employees, employer exhaustion, inability to focus, workplace disruptions and unpaid leave are a few of the factors that contribute to the nearly \$34 billion dollar loss in annual productivity to US businesses due to employee caregiving.” (UW Extension 2012 – What Every Employer Needs to Know)

Since the 1997 Met Life Study of Employer Costs for Working Caregivers, research has helped us understand the issues facing employed caregivers and their employers, regardless of size. New workplace programs have been developed that benefit both the employee and employer.

Interfaith Older Adult Programs – Family Caregiver Support Network (FCSN) is a free resource center for family caregivers which gives assistance to both the caregiving employee and employer.

The following information includes basic steps to help develop a simple, effective program to assist and retain employed caregivers. Use those which are most appropriate for your organization. Additional in depth information is available upon request.

WHERE DO I START?

- **Know the facts:** Nearly 1 in 4 workers age 45 to 64 reports being a family caregiver at some point, the largest of any age group in the workforce.
- **Understand the enormity of the situation:** It is here to stay and growing, the “New Normal.” Therefore, explore how does caregiving fit within your workplace?
- **Look beyond a mistaken belief:** Because employees have not requested help does not mean they do not need assistance.
- **Have conversations:** Learn about the issues your employed caregivers are facing. Read about caregivers and caregiving in publications as they catch your eye, or listen as it appears on television or radio.
- **Conduct an anonymous survey:** Conduct the following free survey to learn about your employees’ caregiving issues, which would indicate the types of workplace supports that would accommodate their needs.
www.extension.org/pages/27975/employed-family-caregiver-survey.
- **Don't recycle:** Keep your caregiver resource information on hand.
- **If there is no Employee Assistance Program (EAP) available:** Encourage a grass-roots volunteer employee support program with assistance from management. If your company is fortunate enough to have an EAP, encourage its use.
- **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA):** If your company offers FMLA, support it. Ensure FMLA is understood and used.
- **Partner with community organizations:** Contact Interfaith Older Adult Programs - Family Caregiver Support Network - for information on community organizations and sponsor a Lunch “n” Learn session, or a resource booth, even make a direct one-on-one referral.



HOW CAN I BETTER SUPPORT MY EMPLOYEES?

- **Create an open door policy:** Make sure employees know you are there for them to talk to, or that there is someone you appoint who is.
- **Extend personal and professional support where appropriate:** Caregivers often grow to feel alone.
- **Supervisors and HR:** Management should become familiar with existing internal and external resources, and know where to find them.

HOW CAN I PUT THIS INTO ACTION?

- **Demonstrate flexibility,** which is a critical need of caregivers.
“Workplace flexibility is important to employees across the life course and can support the productive engagement of older employees as well as younger workers. Flexible work options offer tools that can help companies remain competitive.” (Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College)
- **Develop programs** that can work for both you and your employees. They may contain:
 - Flexible hours
 - Personal Time Off (PTO) and or paid sick leave
 - Leave without pay
 - Elder Emergency Time Off (EETO) – either paid or unpaid
 - Compressed work schedules – allow employees to work more hours in a day, fewer days in the week, job share
 - Shortened work weeks, telecommuting
 - Employee leave-sharing, employees donate a portion of their leave time to caregivers
- **Designate a private space** for employees to make personal calls regarding their care receiver.



- **Make aware and encourage** caregivers to take the American Medical Association's Caregiver self-assessment questionnaire to evaluate their own health and health risks. www.ama.caregiverselfassessment.org
- **Host a Resource Table** and keep resource materials available.
- **Provide training** to Human Resources along with Health Wellness programs for employees.

KEEP CARING FOR THE CAREGIVERS

- Follow up with the caregiver.
- Verify that resources are readily available and are being used.
- Ask if the program is helpful; if not, why not?
- Make changes as needed.



JUST A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)

Although the federal EEO laws do not prohibit discrimination against caregivers, per se, there are circumstances in which discrimination against caregivers might constitute unlawful disparate treatment. The purpose of “Enforcement Guidance: Unlawful Disparate Treatment of Workers with Caregiving Responsibilities” is to assist investigators, employees, and employers in assessing whether a particular employment decision affecting a caregiver might unlawfully discriminate on the basis of prohibited characteristics under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This document is not intended to create a new protected category but rather to illustrate circumstances in which stereotyping or other forms of disparate treatment may violate Title VII. (EEOC - Compliance Manual, Section 615, Volume II – Enforcement Guidance Unlawful Disparate Treatment of Workers with Caregiving Responsibilities.

IN CONCLUSION

True organizational commitment to a change in workplace culture with respect to family friendliness is required to address both attitudes and practices. Although not necessarily seen as “eldercare benefits,” supportive working conditions are the first steps for employers who want to design policies and benefits that promise the returns of retention, commitment and productivity of their workforce. (UW Extension 2012: What Every Employer Needs to Know)



Resources:

Call Interfaith’s Family Caregiver Support Network

414-220-8600 or toll-free

800-449-4481

Visit us on the web at:

www.interfaithmilw.org

www.caregiversupportnetwork.org

www.living-options.org

Look for help state and nationwide at:

www.wisconsin caregiver.org

www.uwex.edu – Search Caregiving and/or Family Caregiving

www.caregiver.org – Family Caregiver Alliance

www.aarp.org – Search Caregiving

www.metlife.com – Search Study of Caregiving

www.alz.org – Click on Caregiver Center

CAN YOU OR YOUR EMPLOYEES ANSWER YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS?

- ✓ Are you concerned about an older adult who lives nearby or at a distance; either at home or in a facility?
- ✓ Do you help with grocery shopping, housekeeping, rides, doctors appointments, bills or insurance?
- ✓ Do you help with feeding, bathing, dressing or supervision?
- ✓ Are you concerned about someone who isn't taking care of him or herself?
- ✓ Are you using all of your own sick leave or vacation time to help or care for someone?

IF SO, YOU ARE A FAMILY CAREGIVER.

SOME SIGNS THAT A CAREGIVER MAY NEED HELP:

- More colds, flu and infections; high blood pressure; headaches; fatigue; weight loss or gain; stomach or digestive problems; back, shoulder or neck pain.
- Irritability, stress, anxiety, depression, memory loss, lack of concentration
- Problems falling asleep, waking up in the middle of the night, restlessness
- Loss of interest in things you once enjoyed; isolation
- Problems at work or with family members; road rage

Your role as caregiver is not always easy. Interfaith's Family Caregiver Support Network understands that caregiving can take time, energy and money. Let us assist you and the person you care about.

A Caregiver's Code

I need to...

Take care of myself

physically, emotionally, spiritually;

Accept my limitations

and be satisfied with doing my best;

Recognize and get help,

no matter how difficult that may be;

Enjoy time away

without guilt;

Maintain relationships

with friends, family, co-workers;

Set goals, pursue dreams

and remember to live life.

 **Interfaith**
OLDER ADULT PROGRAMS **We Can Help.**

Caregiver Support

**FAMILY
CAREGIVER
SUPPORT NETWORK**

(414) 220-8600

www.living-options.org

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