IN THIS ISSUE:
DEPENDENT CARE:
SUPPORTING WORKING FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AND ELDERLY DEPENDENTS

- WHY DO WORKING FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENTS NEED RESOURCES?
- WHAT ARE POLICYMAKERS DOING TO SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENTS?
- WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

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DEPENDENT CARE:
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Working families with children and/or elderly relatives face greater strain than ever before in meeting demands at the workplace and at home. Providing resources to families with dependent care needs can help them better manage their work and family responsibilities, benefiting employees, employers, dependents, and society.

HOW MANY WORKING FAMILIES HAVE DEPENDENT CARE RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Seventeen percent of the workforce cares for an elderly relative; demographics suggest that this number will continue to rise.
- Single parents work in 91% of the 11 million single parent families.
- Both parents work in 63% of the 24 million married couple families.

Many working families with dependents are unable to adequately meet the demands of their jobs and their dependent care responsibilities. Without resources to manage these responsibilities, there are significant, negative repercussions for caretakers, their dependents, their employers, and society.

** Many of today’s working parents are members of the “sandwich generation,” caretakers for their children as well as an older parent or relative.

EMPLOYEES WITH DEPENDENT CARE RESPONSIBILITIES NEED RESOURCES.

Research demonstrates the value of providing resources to working families with dependents:

- Women’s mental and physical health is enhanced by a period of leave following childbirth. Shorter maternity leaves are related to higher rates of maternal depression and more difficulty adjusting to work.
- Problems with childcare arrangements (not being able to send a sick child to school, daycare, etc.) are associated with higher levels of depression for low-income mothers, the group least likely to have access to leave.
- Employees facing work-family conflict are significantly more likely to have a mood disorder, anxiety disorder, or substance abuse problem.
- Work-family conflict is associated with decreased life satisfaction and increased health problems.
- Workers without leave benefits—both paid and unpaid—are at financial risk. These workers face disruptions in employment or must return to welfare when forced to take time off for dependent care responsibilities.

“IT’S BEEN AN ONGOING MISSION IN WASHINGTON STATE TO MAKE WORKPLACES MORE FAMILY FRIENDLY. IN 2005 WE WERE SUCCESSFUL IN PASSING THE FAMILY CARE ACT, WHICH ALLOWS WORKERS WITH ACCESS TO PAID SICK LEAVE OR OTHER PAID TIME OFF TO USE THIS TIME TO CARE FOR A SICK CHILD OR A SPOUSE OR PARENT WITH A SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITION. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE EROSION OF FRINGE BENEFITS FOR WORKERS, THIS ONLY COVERED ABOUT HALF OF THE WORKFORCE. WITH TREMENDOUS SUPPORT FROM THE WASHINGTON PUBLIC-73% OF WHO SUPPORT PAID LEAVE-WE WERE ENERGIZED TO GO FURTHER FOR WORKING FAMILIES. ESTABLISHING FAMILY LEAVE INSURANCE (SB5659) WILL ENSURE MORE WORKING FAMILIES WITH NEW BABY OR NEWLY ADOPTED CHILD WILL HAVE ACCESS TO PAID LEAVE TO BOND WITH THEIR CHILD. THE PLAN WE CREATED IS REASONABLE, CREATING SECURITY FOR WORKING FAMILIES BY ENSURING THEY HAVE ACCESS TO PAID LEAVE WHEN IT IS NEEDED MOST.” —SENATOR KAREN KEISER (WA)
Resources for working families benefit children and elderly dependents.

- Children recover faster when parents are able to care for them and also have shorter hospital stays when their parents are involved in their care plan.\textsuperscript{10}
- Employees who take leave report that doing so had positive effects on their ability to provide care for a family member.\textsuperscript{11}
- Children’s academic performance is positively associated with parental access to resources that enable them to manage their work-family responsibilities.\textsuperscript{12}

Supporting employees with dependent care responsibilities makes good business sense.

Many employers have already recognized that business benefits when they provide resources for employees with dependent care responsibilities.

- Employees facing work/family conflict have higher rates of tardiness and absenteeism, diminished overall performance, and are more likely to seek new employment.\textsuperscript{13}
- Employees with access to resources that enable them to meet to their dependent care responsibilities are absent less, late less, and report increased productivity.\textsuperscript{14}
- Employees rate businesses that offer flexible schedules and dependent care leave as much more desirable places to work.\textsuperscript{15}

The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is not enough.

The FMLA provides legislative support for working families with dependents. However, the FMLA has some significant restrictions that prevent many working families with dependents from utilizing it:

- FMLA covers only 55% of the workforce.\textsuperscript{16}
  - Only employers with more than 50 employees living within a 75 mile radius must offer FMLA.\textsuperscript{17} To be eligible for FMLA, employees must have worked for a covered employer for the previous year and for at least 1,250 hours.\textsuperscript{17} Additionally, covered employers are not required to provide FMLA to employees in the top 10% of the payroll.
- FMLA is unpaid.\textsuperscript{17}
  - Of those who can and need to take FMLA, the most common reason for not doing so — cited by nearly two thirds — is that they cannot afford the loss of income, despite the fact that taking leave has positive effects on their ability to care for family members and manage work/family conflict.\textsuperscript{18}
- FMLA cannot be used for preventative or routine medical services.

FMLA covers only 55% of the workforce.\textsuperscript{16}

How can policymakers support working families with dependents?

Provide incentives and give recognition to employers who:

- Create flexible scheduling options
- Offer on site or sponsored child/elder care
- Make paid family sick leave available
- Provide paid maternity leave

Advocate for state-wide legislation that would:

- Enable employees to use personal sick time as family sick time
- Expand the FMLA at the state level to cover more employees and to cover preventative medical care services
- Guarantee paid maternity leave
- Enact a paid family leave policy

Constituents support legislation that would help working families with dependents.

A 2000 report found that:

- 75% of people believe the government should do more to help working families.\textsuperscript{19}
- 80% expressed support for paid parental leave.\textsuperscript{19}
- 85% expressed support for paid parental leave for the arrival of a new child or a family medical crisis.\textsuperscript{19}

Most states have already enacted legislation to support working families with dependents.

- Forty states allow public employees to utilize sick leave to care for ill family members (eligible family members vary by state).\textsuperscript{20}
- In six states, private sector employees with paid sick leave are able to use the time for family sick leave (CA, CT, HI, MN, WA, WI).\textsuperscript{20}
- One state has established paid family leave, which provides up to six weeks a year to care for a newborn or a seriously ill family member with partial wage replacement (CA).\textsuperscript{20}
States have made working families with dependents a priority this session.

Nineteen states have already proposed legislation to support working families with dependents, including:

- Establishing committees to explore a paid family leave program (HI)
- Providing greater legal protections for employees who utilize FMLA (OR, TX)
- Allowing employees’ sick and/or vacation leave to be used for family leave (MD, MN, OR, WV)
- Providing a tax credit to employers offering paid leave (NM, PA)
- Establishing a Family and Medical Leave Independent Savings Account Act, to provide a tax credit to contributing employees (NY)
- Establishing a state-wide Family Leave Benefits Insurance Account (OR)
- Extending some aspect of FMLA (CA, CT, IL, ME, NM, OR, RI)
- Providing some form of paid family leave (HI, IL, MA, ME, NJ, NY, TN, WA)

For more bills and statutes, visit wfnetwork.bc.edu/bills.php

Where can I get more information?

- Linking Economic Development and Childcare Project at Cornell University
  Along with providing demographic and economic information for all 50 states, this site includes research reports, copies of state studies, advice on economic analysis, and profiles of new approaches to child care policy. http://government.cce.cornell.edu/doc/reports/childcare/default.asp

- The Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA)
  FCA is a public voice for caregivers, providing information, education, services, research and advocacy to support and sustain the important work of families caring for loved ones with chronic, disabling health conditions. http://www.caregiver.org

- The Paid Family Leave Collaborative Outreach & Education Campaign
  A clearinghouse for California’s Paid Leave Law, the site provides information about paid leave legislation in other states. http://www.paidfamilyleave.org/

- The Labor Project for Working Families
  The Labor Project for Working Families is a national, nonprofit advocacy and policy organization providing technical assistance, resources, and education to unions and union members on family issues in the workplace including: Childcare, Elder care, and Family leave. http://www.working-families.org
Sources cited in this Policy Leadership Sheet


10 Heymann, J., Toomey, S., & Furstenberg, F. (1999). Working parents: What factors are involved in their ability to take time off from work when their children are sick? Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 153(8), 870-874.


