

Employment and Care Giving: Is There a Balance?



Because of healthier older adults, an increasing number of caregivers in the workplace, the rising number of elderly in the workplace and accelerating costs of services, businesses are being pushed into facing elder care issues in the workplace.

Significant demographic and social factors are placing a sense of urgency on employers to address the issue of care giving employees. Care giving and employment: can you do both and still find time for yourself and your family? Many caregivers are asking themselves this question. Caregivers report having trouble balancing work and their care giving responsibilities.

Multiple role demands often take their toll on work-related responsibilities. Some of the effects on employment and trying to find a balance are: absenteeism, tardiness, work interruptions, missed advancement opportunities and increased job stress. Other consequences that might affect your work are physical fatigue, depression, decreased quality of care, interruptions during the work day related to the care giving role, emotional upsets and taking time off.

Employers can help relieve some of that role strain by providing their care giving employees with work alternatives. When businesses create policies that respond to the caregiver employee's needs there is the potential for all parties to benefit:

- Employees' health and well-being are preserved.
- Employers profit from the continuing productivity of the employee and lower employee use of health care and other benefits.
- The dependent, for whom the caregiver is caring, receives better quality care.

Employers working to address the issues involved with care giving need to understand the concepts of aging and elder care. Broadening their understanding in those areas will help identify the needs of their care giving employees.

Many businesses that have taken action on these issues are offering a variety of benefits to employees. Some of these benefits include:

- Family illness leave
- Flexible work hours
- Long term care insurance
- Elder care resource guides
- Employee leave bank
- Deficit leave
- Opportunities for support groups
- On-site adult day care
- Employee assistance program
- Elder care workshops
- Educational programs
- Resource library
- Work at home options
- Exchanging sick leave for caregiver time

Job flexibility was found by employers and caregivers to be associated with a decrease in work interference and to assist caregivers in handling daytime emergencies. Employers and caregivers found that job performance and satisfaction increased and lateness and job turnover decreased.

The benefits to businesses, employees and care recipients are becoming more evident. Employers have begun to take an active role in offering assistance to employees to help them manage the demands of multiple roles.

Reference: Taylor, Christine B. *Employment and Caregiving: Is There a Balance?* Trumbull County: Ohio State University Extension.

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