

Supporting the Caregiving Workforce:

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



Area Agency
on Aging
OF NORTH CENTRAL TEXAS

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
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INTRODUCTION

The American workforce has shifted. More employees are now balancing careers with caring for aging or disabled parents, spouses, or family members. This guide offers actionable steps for employers to support these “employee-caregivers.”

For employers, supporting caregivers is important for a stable and effective workplace. As the Baby Boomer generation ages, the demand for care can often outpace available services. This can leave the burden on family members who are often your full-time employees.

When employees miss work or leave their jobs to provide care, it can lead to significant costs for businesses. Offering support can help reduce these impacts and may lead to better attendance, higher productivity, and improved employee satisfaction.

Understanding Caregiving in the Modern Workplace

Caregiving is rarely something people plan for. It usually happens suddenly because a loved one needs help.

- ▶ **Who Are Caregivers?** Anyone providing unpaid assistance to an older adult or person with a disability. They are diverse: from a 20-year-old associate helping a grandparent to a 60-year-old executive caring for a spouse. Note that many family caregivers are men, and millennials are stepping into these roles earlier than previous generations.
- ▶ **The Dual Role:** Balancing a job and caregiving is like working two shifts. Employees handle care duties before and after work. They often use their lunch breaks to make doctors' appointments or handle medical calls.
- ▶ **Impact on Employees:** Caregivers face higher stress, physical exhaustion, and financial strain from out-of-pocket costs and reduced working hours.
- ▶ **Impact on Employers:** Without support, businesses face distracted workers, increased absenteeism, and the loss of talented and committed staff due to brain drain.

The Benefits of a Caregiver-Friendly Workplace

Supporting employees who have caregiving responsibilities is a practical business choice. Companies that offer support in this area often see clear benefits. Here are some of the main advantages.

Higher Retention and Lower Costs

Offering options like caregiver resources, flexible schedules, and paid leave can help staff stay with the company. This can lower the costs of hiring and training new employees. Research from Harvard Business School shows that caregiving benefits can increase retention, keeping experienced team members helps the organization maintain stability and knowledge.



About 80 percent of the workers surveyed for the report said that caring for another person impacts their productivity.

Improved Engagement and Productivity

Research from Kaiser Permanente shows that when employees feel understood and supported in their caregiving roles, they are more likely to stay focused and engaged at work. Supportive policies can reduce stress and make it easier for employees to manage their responsibilities. This leads to better concentration and productivity during work hours. Companies that provide support to caregivers often see teams that are more committed to their work.

A Stronger Competitive Advantage

Organizations with caregiver-friendly policies are more likely to attract and retain skilled employees, including those with caregiving responsibilities. In a competitive job market, supporting employees' real-life needs can help your company stand out to job seekers.

A Positive and Healthy Culture

Supporting caregivers at work can help build a healthier and more flexible workplace culture. When businesses provide benefits that support employees' lives inside and outside of work, it helps create a better work environment for everyone, not just those with caregiving responsibilities.



Creating a Supportive Culture for Caregiving Employees

Caregiving employees may hesitate to share their challenges due to stigma or fear of professional repercussions. Instead of monitoring or approaching employees directly, focus on building a workplace where they feel safe to self-identify and seek support.

- ▶ Regularly communicate available resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), flexible scheduling options, and caregiver-specific benefits, through newsletters, intranet updates, and team meetings.
- ▶ Provide training for managers to understand caregiving challenges and respond empathetically when employees voluntarily share their situations.
- ▶ Leaders can set the tone by sharing their own work-life integration challenges, helping to normalize conversations about caregiving.
- ▶ Make it easy for employees to find and use caregiving resources without fear of stigma or negative career impact.

Workplace Flexibility

Flexibility can be offered in ways that balance employee needs with business goals:

- ▶ Provide consistent and predictable work schedules to help employees plan caregiving responsibilities.
- ▶ Allow employees to request temporary schedule changes or shift swaps to accommodate caregiving needs.
- ▶ Offer gradual return-to-work options after caregiving-related leave to retain experienced employees.

Leave Policies & Benefits

- ▶ Expand family leave policies to include eldercare and care for disabled family members.
- ▶ Ensure employees know they can use sick leave for caregiving without fear of repercussions.
- ▶ Allow employees to donate unused PTO to colleagues in caregiving crises.
- ▶ Educate employees on how these accounts can cover adult care expenses, such as adult day care.

By focusing on small, manageable changes, employers can support caregiving employees without compromising productivity or profitability.



Practical Resources for Employers

Supporting caregiving employees doesn't have to mean creating programs from scratch. Many resources already exist to help families navigate eldercare, and your role as an employer can be to connect your staff with these tools. By partnering with organizations like the North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging (NCTAAA), you can provide meaningful support without overextending your resources.

Collaborating on an Eldercare Packet

Instead of building an Eldercare Packet from the ground up, employers can work with NCTAAA to provide employees with a curated set of resources, saving you time and effort.

What to Include:

- ▶ **Local and National Resources:** NCTAAA can provide a list of key organizations, including our services, and national groups like AARP and the Alzheimer's Association.
- ▶ **Guides and Fact Sheets:** NCTAAA can supply materials on Medicare, long-term care, local transportation, home-delivered meals, and respite care.

How to Distribute: Make the packet available digitally on your intranet or benefits portal, and provide printed copies for employees who prefer physical materials. Promote the packet periodically in newsletters and during staff meetings.

Hosting Caregiver Fairs with NCTAAA

Caregiver fairs are a great way to connect employees with local resources, and NCTAAA can help you organize these events.

- ▶ **Partnering with Local Experts:** NCTAAA can identify and invite relevant service providers who can provide meal delivery services, respite care, or other critical support. Many of these organizations participate at no cost.
- ▶ **Flexible Formats:** Host the fair on-site in a common area or virtually for remote teams. NCTAAA can assist with providing digital materials. For smaller businesses, consider co-hosting with other companies in your area.

Educational Seminars Made Simple

Educational sessions can empower employees with knowledge to navigate caregiving challenges, and NCTAAA can help you bring in expert speakers.

Topics:

- ▶ Federal, state, and local supports for caregivers.
- ▶ Dementia care strategies.
- ▶ Navigating Medicare and Medicaid.
- ▶ Self-care and stress management for caregivers.
- ▶ Understanding community-based and institutional care options for older adults.

Low-Cost Options: Many local agencies, including NCTAAA, offer speakers at little or no cost. Sessions can be recorded for employees to access later.



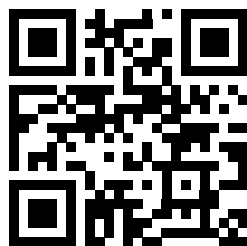
Employer Checklist: Supporting Caregiving Employees

- ☐ **Understand Employee Needs:** Use surveys or listening sessions to identify caregiving challenges.
- ☐ **Train and Empower Managers:** Equip managers to respond empathetically and supportively.
- ☐ **Communicate Clearly:** Ensure employees know about caregiving-related benefits and resources.
- ☐ **Offer Practical Flexibility:** Provide manageable options like shift adjustments or phased returns.
- ☐ **Collaborate with Experts:** Partner with organizations like NCTAAA to provide resources and education.
- ☐ **Lead by Example:** Encourage leaders to model work-life balance and support for caregivers.



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