



Caregiving: The Impact of Unpaid Work on Employees

The global pandemic exacerbated issues that employees may have already been struggling with—in particular, caregiving. Whether it is responsibility for a child, parent, relative, partner or pet, caregiving is the unpaid work your employees must do when they finish their workdays. The pandemic has made it even more challenging. We have all faced new complications and stressors — homeschooling (or attempting to) while working, feeding children who otherwise would be fed at school, providing virtual care for non-tech savvy parents, and training newly adopted pets—all while being productive and present at work. The strain of caregiving during the pandemic led to an exodus of women from the workforce, particularly Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income women, as they are often the ones responsible for the oversight of caregiving responsibilities.^{1,2}

TRADITIONAL CAREGIVING RESOURCES FELL SHORT

Historically, employers offered resources to offset the burden of caregiving. Whether through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), paid leave, back-up childcare services, on-site childcare or flexible work schedules, many employers were seemingly prepared to help employees with their caregiving needs. However, the unique situation of the pandemic—in particular, the limited ability to have human interaction and the heavy reliance on technology—created obstacles that even the most prepared employers could not have foreseen. Furthermore, the gaps in caregiving resources available to BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and lower socioeconomic employees became greatly apparent as many struggled to juggle their paid work as employees and unpaid work as caregivers.

For employers, caregiving benefits and perks are no longer a check-the-box solution, but rather provide an opportunity to re-imagine inclusive family-friendly programs, with careful consideration of diversity and equity.





PAVING THE WAY FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Employers now have an opportunity to enhance their support of caregivers in new and meaningful ways:

Issues	Examples of Solutions
Starting/expanding a family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Fertility/pregnancy digital solutions▪ Adoption assistance for LGBTQ+▪ Expanded coverage of infertility treatments & surrogacy benefits▪ Expanded paid leave for moms and dads▪ Welcome home package for new parents with helpful resources
Lack of affordable childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Back-up childcare services (traditional)▪ Concierge childcare placement services▪ Subsidized childcare (e.g., monthly stipend)▪ Onsite childcare
Learning from home...and now, catching students up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Concierge tutor placement▪ Access to discounted tutor network (virtual options)▪ Subsidizing the cost of tutors
Caring for parents/aging relatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Concierge/licensed eldercare support services▪ Platform of eldercare resources and access to experts
Caring for dependents with special needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Concierge/1:1 special needs services▪ Platform of resources and access to experts to support education and special needs
Feeding your family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Subsidized community-supported agriculture (CSA), meal subscription kits, and/or grocery gift cards▪ Onsite food pantries
Caring for pets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Pet insurance▪ Paid leave for newly adopted pets▪ Access to pet sitting network/discounts



In addition to these programs addressing specific issues, there are other more general ways to support caregivers:

- Make “No layoff” commitments
- Provide early raises/bonuses
- Establish community support groups
- Increase/expand flexibility (e.g., more time off, scheduling options)
- Open new lines of communication
- Emphasize results and outcomes instead of hours worked
- Provide emotional health/wellbeing days for employees to use at their discretion
- Set norms/policies about responding to email/Slack after work hours

Further, efforts to train managers and leaders on caregiving resources and policies, along with leader and people manager development and coaching around flexibility and empathy skills, can reinforce a culture of support.

RESOURCES WILL CONTINUE TO EVOLVE

We anticipate caregiving issues will continue to evolve. For example, special needs and educational resources will be an ongoing priority for caregivers of school-aged children, particularly the most vulnerable students and families. In addition, there may be many who have missed services, milestones, or support to pursue higher education.

Employers should consider conducting an inventory of programs and policies, identifying needs, listening to employees’ pain points, promoting existing policies and offerings, and exploring emerging solutions to address gaps in traditional benefits. By working to offset some of the issues associated with caregiving that can burden (and burnout) their workforce, employers also can improve productivity as well as their ability to attract and retain talent.

¹Parents at the Best Workplaces 2020 Report, Maven;

²Women in the Workplace 2020 Report, McKinsey & Company

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