



Workplace Equity: How to Manage Employees, Who are Also Family Caregivers

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Today, more than 50 million Americans are “family caregivers”—the primary caregiver for a sick, disabled or elderly family member. Since nearly half of all family caregivers also hold [full-time jobs](#), employers need to be aware of the stress and emotional aspects that come with a caregiving situation.

Compounding the challenge is the fact that as the U.S. population ages, and as the average life span continues to be on the rise, more employees will take on family caregiving roles. For employers, this means more workers who are dividing their attention and time between work demands and caregiving demands.

Fortunately, there are ways to create an [effective work environment](#) that enables the employee to be productive and continue to contribute to the company’s goals despite caregiving responsibilities. The following suggestions will help.

1. Get to Know Your Staff

As an employer or manager, it’s helpful to be aware of your employees’ individual situations and how they may affect job performance. You can do this by spending time with them in an informal setting, such as a break room over coffee, a quarterly lunch out or simply chatting during a slow time. Many employees are happy to share information about their families, hobbies and interests outside of the workplace. The more you know about your employees, the better you’ll be at managing them through any challenge, just be cautious not to overstep boundaries. Check with your [human resources professional](#) to make sure you are following all company rules and national/state employment laws before you start discussing issues like this with your staff.

2. Examine Your Hours of Operation

Most businesses have core hours of operation during which staff attendance is mandatory. Identify those core hours for your company. Chances are they add up to only 20 to 30 hours of an employee’s weekly schedule. Use the other 10 to 20 hours to offer flexible work hours to your entire staff, not just those who are caregivers.

The key is creativity. For example, you may allow an employee to come in two hours later than usual, but stay two hours later at night. Or maybe someone takes a longer lunch break and makes up the hours later in the day. If possible, consider four 10-hour days rather than five 8-hour days. Remember, the goal is not reducing someone’s hours; it is being flexible in meeting coverage needs during core and non-core hours. In return, you’ll relieve workplace stress, boost morale and increase productivity.

3. Make Information Available

Many companies offer benefits for employees who care for a family member. These benefits may include employee assistance programs, personal leaves of absence, and the [Family Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#). However, don’t assume all employees are aware of the types of programs offered by your company. You can help, by making available the information that addresses a variety of employee needs. Post pamphlets in break rooms for local service providers of elder care, children care, respite care and the Local Area on Aging office, as well as information on the company’s various assistance programs. Making the information readily available increases the likelihood of employees reading it.



Press Release

A Win/Win Scenario for All

With today's weakening economy and shrinking talent pool, employee retention is important. Doing all you can to educate employees about resources available and staying flexible will help you develop a win/win proposition that benefits you, your employees and their families.

For more information on family caregiving, visit www.RedCross.org[http://www.redcross.org]. To provide your employees with information on caring for their loved ones, you can order the American Red Cross **'Family Caregiving'** reference guide and DVD set by phone at (800) 667-2968, online at www.RedCrossStore.org[http://www.redcrossstore.org] or by contacting your local American Red Cross chapter.