Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit

COLORADO
Department of Public
Health & Environment

HEALTH LINKS

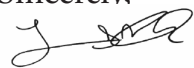EPIC Executives Partnering to Invest In Children

Table of Contents

Foreword

It is the mission of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to protect and improve the health of Colorado's people and this Toolkit provides employers with examples of how they can support their workforce. Employers play a critical role in the lives of their employees, after all, the average person in the United States spends 8.9 hours a day at work in comparison to 1.2 hours they spend caring for others (http://www.bls.gov/tus/charts/). It is for that reason employees should feel supported in the workplace. Stress and economic insecurity are risk factors for a number of health related issues, including: psychological distress, chronic disease, obesity, etc. In addition, these two risk factors can often be found as contributing to child abuse and neglect, sexual violence, child fatality, and suicide to name a few. The Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit provides evidence informed best practice examples for employers to implement within their organization. These policies and practices are proven to be supportive of employees with different needs and ultimately lead to better health outcomes. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment acknowledges the business community as key stakeholders in the effort to create a healthy Colorado. Please join us in promoting these best practices.

Sincerely,

Larry Wolk, MD, MSPH
Chief Medical Officer, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

The Need for Family-Friendly Workplaces

The Importance of Productive Employees

Ask CEOs for the secrets of their success, and many say they found the right people and helped them to do their best work. Others say they have treated their employees like family, earning their loyalty and dedication. Nurturing talent, cultivating diversity – these strategies all emphasize the importance of finding and keeping skilled, productive employees.

Employers are finding that it's not enough to invest in employees during the hours they are on the job. Just as tensions from work may spill over into home life, we can carry our personal, family issues into the workplace, where they affect our stress levels, focus and productivity. Both work and family suffer when we don't have enough flexibility and resources to meet all of our responsibilities.

Research shows that a family-friendly workplace that offers flexibility, supportive benefits, resources and opportunities for advancement yields significant benefits to employers in the form of increased productivity, improved employee loyalty and commitment, less frequent turnover, lower absenteeism and a reduction in other costs.

Aside from the bottom line benefits of meeting employee needs, most employers and managers genuinely care for the people who work for them and want them to succeed at work and at home. A 2015 survey of high level executives across the country indicated significant empathy for employees and their families, expressed in support for higher wages and paid family leave.[1] Another national survey, conducted in 2014, found that employers offer employee and family assistance initiatives for both business and altruistic motives, giving reasons such as 'Help employees manage work and family life,' 'It is the right thing to do,' and 'We are a caring organization.'

By starting and maintaining businesses and organizations, Colorado employers have already shown their willingness to invest in the future of our state and its citizens.

Developers of this Toolkit are particularly interested in promoting the health and well-being of young children. Research continues to uncover new reasons that early childhood is a crucial window for human development, with long range consequences for all of us. Family-friendly employment is a strategy that contributes to safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments for young children. Please see the boxes on the following pages for more on the critical importance of early childhood.

However, the ideas and process in the Toolkit will guide employers in creating or enhancing a workplace that supports all employees in managing their work responsibilities and personal lives, whether they have children or not. Many of these practices will help employers attract and keep a capable and diverse group of employees whose needs are often overlooked, including disabled veterans and other people with disabilities, parents of children with special needs and those providing care for elderly parents.

Changes in Society

Changes in society over the past few decades have made the adoption of family-friendly employment policies vitally important.

The numbers indicate that American families—and their communities—are more overextended than they were forty or fifty years ago.

- Fifty years ago, more than half of American children were growing up with married parents, a father employed full-time and a mother who was not in the workforce. Now only one-fifth of children live in such a family.[2]

- Over the last 50 years, households in which all adults are employed outside the home has increased from 40% to more than 60%.[3]

- In 2014, more than 815,000 children in Colorado lived in families in which all parents work.[4]

- With fewer full-time homemakers, there are not as many adults in the community who are available to volunteer and provide backup support for other families in the community during the work day.

- One in five same-sex couples are raising a child.[5]

- Fathers have increasingly taken on the role of primary caregiver.[6] Today, in one in five families with an employed mother, fathers are the primary caregiver for preschool-age children.[7] In the last 25 years, the number of families with a stay-at-home father and a working mother has doubled.[8]

A prosperous future depends on all of us

As a society, our future prosperity depends on the next generation—children who are babies and toddlers today. Colorado thrives when our children thrive because they are our future workforce, leaders, and community members. All children, no matter their background, deserve the chance to participate in creating Colorado's future. We, the community, can pull together to help ensure that children have that chance by supporting parents and encouraging positive parenting.

We all have a role to play in preparing Colorado's children for the future – even those of us in the business community who may not be directly involved in raising children.

The Definition of "Family"

Families have changed over the last fifty years, but their importance to society and to each individual has not. The family is a unit where we provide, and receive, financial and emotional support. Typically, our families are the most important people in our lives. That's true no matter what our family looks like. This Toolkit emphasizes policies and benefits that support employees and their children, but some employees consider their parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, grandchildren and even pets to be their family. Except in cases where a specific legal relationship is defined in the law or the tax code, the Toolkit uses a broad definition of "family," and we encourage you to do the same.

When our family members need care, it can be difficult to be fully present at work. Employers that are willing to provide flexibility when needed are rewarded with increased employee loyalty, engagement, and productivity.

Supporting Caregivers

Does flexibility mean giving special privileges to women who are mothers? Absolutely not. Supporting mothers and other women who are caregivers is crucial, but women are not the only caregivers. A strategy that provides special treatment to women not only backfires for women, by assuming they are less committed employees, but also can open employers to charges of discrimination. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), even "benevolent" or well-intentioned stereotyping, such as a manager not considering a mother

Supporting positive parenting

Parents and caregivers need to be supported with smart business policies that produce bottom-line results and help strengthen families, prevent abuse and neglect, aid caregivers struggling with adversity, and promote positive parenting so children can achieve their potential. Research shows that safety, stability, and nurturing are three critical qualities that are necessary for a child to thrive.

Family-friendly policies in the workplace can make a big difference in a parent's ability to raise their children to succeed and participate in Colorado's future.

We're all in this together!

for a promotion because it might increase her workload, can be a violation.[9]

The EEOC's best practices to reduce EEO violations against caregivers states, "Flexible work policies that help employees achieve a satisfactory work-life balance may not only experience decreased complaints of unlawful discrimination, but may also benefit their workers, their customer base, and their bottom line."[10]

In short, an expert in work-life law has suggested, "Employers can protect themselves both by eliminating stereotypes about caregivers from personnel decisions and by proactively creating programs that support all employees' caregiving needs."[11]

A Challenge and an Opportunity

Acknowledging that employees are multi-dimensional people, with personal lives, family responsibilities and competing demands has required employers to tackle challenges that employers a few generations ago didn't confront. Addressing those challenges gives family-friendly employers a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining skilled employees.

This Toolkit is designed to help employers explore how adding more flexibility and additional benefits can enhance organizational productivity and support the physical and emotional health of employees and their families.

We hope you'll take your next–or first—step to increase the family-friendliness of your workplace by considering the options and implementation process we describe on the following pages.

Components of a Family-Friendly Workplace

A family-friendly workplace offers

- A culture of flexibility
- Core benefits
- Paid leave
- Supportive services and resources
- Career development
- Community involvement

See resources for each of these components on page 23.

A Culture of Flexibility

Flexibility can be defined as allowing work to be done outside of the traditional Monday through Friday, 9-to-5 schedule or in a different location. Employer policies that allow flexibility in the time or place work is performed are helpful to employees in managing their work and personal responsibilities.

Numerous studies have shown that employees and potential employees place high value on flexibility. Three in four respondents (both employees and job-seekers) to a 2015 survey ranked workplace flexibility as the benefit they most desired. Employers in the same study credited the flexibility of their workplace with improvements in employee satisfaction (87%), productivity (71%) and retention (65%). Results also showed that 69% of the employers were using flexibility as a selling point in recruiting.[12]

Flexibility isn't as easy as creating policies, however. A truly flexible workplace needs both supportive policies and supportive managers.

Policies by themselves accomplish little if managers subtly or overtly discourage employees from using flextime, working from home, or taking family leave. Employees must know they can succeed at the organization, whether or not they use the flexibility offered.

On the other hand, leaving flexibility up to individual managers can result in a culture of inequity that harms employee morale and may ultimately undermine the family-friendly environment that is intended.

Flexibility requires a culture of mutual trust and an emphasis on results over face time. Developing this trust between management and employees may be difficult, but experts agree it is essential to a flexible workplace— and perhaps to any successful workplace.

A 2015 assessment found that a breakdown in trust was "a significant driver" leading employees to search for new jobs. Further, staff members were "more likely to feel under such pressure to be 'seen' as productive that they were unable to leave their desks for a break . . . . a case of an office culture where 'being seen to be busy' is taking precedence over actually being productive." Survey results showed that "nearly 40 percent of all unhappy employees specifically identified flexibility as a factor that would improve their job satisfaction."[13]

Ideally managers will contribute to the development of policies, understand the business rationale behind them, and receive training or guidance on how to implement them. As with any other organizational goal, opportunities for staff input, managerial commitment, transparency about policies, and fairness in implementation result in the establishment or enhancement of a successful family-friendly environment.

Employer example:

A 2013 case study of Ryan, LLC, a global tax services firm with 2,100 employees and annual revenues of more than $350 million, documented their shift from a "tax services sweatshop" to an award-winning flexible work environment where employees choose when and where to complete their assignments.

In 2008, the firm moved away from evaluating employees based on hours logged and developed meaningful performance metrics. Now, each employee must meet a set of financial and performance benchmarks, tracked on a dashboard visible to the individual employee, his/ her manager, and company leadership. Teams have their own set of benchmarks and each team develops a framework of agreements to help them do their best work.

The firm's employee turnover rate dropped from 23% in 2007 to 16% in 2012. Employee satisfaction scores rose dramatically. For example, the employee survey showed an increase in agreement that "This is a great place to work," from 56% in 2005 to 87% in 2012. Client services scores also increased, from 90% in 2007 to 98% in 2012.

Ryan found that training managers and employees was "essential," to make the critical shift to managing (and being managed) based on results. It has also helped managers and team members respect each other's range of work styles.[14]

Time Flexibility

Modifying work hours is probably the most widely used family-friendly policy in the U.S., and it is used by employers of all sizes and industries. In fact, smaller employers are leaders in flexible hours. The Families and Work Institute's 2014 National Study of Employers found that small organizations (50-99 employees) "have been leading the way over the past decade." Because they often have less formal cultures, small employers are more likely than large organizations (1,000 or more employees) to, for example, allow employees to take time during the day to attend to personal or family needs or let employees set their own break times, and adjust their schedules.

There are various ways of offering time flexibility:

- Occasional flexibility – Many employers allow a worker to come in later or leave earlier than usual to tend to occasional personal matters, such as meetings at a child's school. Employees make up the time rather than taking leave.

- Alternate schedule – An employee's regular schedule may start earlier or later than most employees.

- Core hours – The employer sets core hours when employees must be working, but otherwise allows employees flexibility in completing their work day. If core hours are set from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., employees must work those hours but may start work earlier or finish later.

- Compressed work week – An employee works four 10-hour days in a week or nine 9-hour days in two weeks.

- Part-time work – Offering part-time options allows employers to attract and retain employees who aren't able to work traditional hours. The opportunity to reduce hours can also be mutually beneficial when employees are preparing to retire or coming back from parental leave.

- Job sharing – Two employees work part-time, sharing a single position, receiving full or pro-rated benefits. This may allow an employer to retain two employees who wish to reduce hours when a part-time position is not feasible. Job-sharing employees also bring two sets of skills and twice the knowledge, can check each other's work and can provide continuity on sick days and during vacations.

Employer example:

After Arapahoe/Douglas Works!, in Aurora, adopted flexible scheduling, absenteeism dropped nearly 42% over two years. Employees rated flexible scheduling as one of their most valuable benefits.[16]

Note that flexibility isn't only for higher wage jobs. Employers in industries such as retail have implemented flexibility successfully for front-line service jobs. Cross-training, allowing employees to swap part or all of a shift, and letting employees take leave in small (one or two hour) increments are strategies that benefit employers as well as employees.[17] Even manufacturing companies have adopted flexibility strategies such as compressed work weeks, alternative shift arrangements, shift swapping, flexibility in start and stop times and employee input into break times. Development of flexibility in service and manufacturing jobs, as in other jobs, depends on mutual trust and an emphasis on results.[18]

Location Flexibility or "Telework"

Another familiar form of flexibility is telework—the ability to work from home or another off-site location. (Sometimes the term flexiplace is used instead, and working from home can be called telecommuting.) Employees may telework regularly or only occasionally.

While not a substitute for child care, working at home allows employees to spend less time commuting, so they can enjoy that time with their families. It also reduces commuting costs and stress. Occasional telework can be a good solution when an employee has a minor illness or an appointment near home, allowing them to take less time away from work.

Employer example:

Insurance company Aetna developed a telework strategy as a way to retain employees while it consolidated some facilities. The policy allowed employees to work remotely after they had performed successfully at the company for six months. In 2007, after the program had been active company-wide for two years, 20% of the staff were teleworking. By March 2015, nearly half (47%) of employees worked from home full-time, including 31% of supervisors and managers, and the program had not only reduced turnover but also reduced office space expenses by an estimated $80 million per year. Aetna claims the policy has also made the company more attractive to pre-retirees and to people with disabilities.[19] [20]

Employers have documented increases in productivity, reductions in turnover, and reduction in real estate costs. Employers can also benefit from productive employees working off-site in case of bad weather or major traffic disruptions that interfere with travel to the office.

Employers and teleworkers who have been successful recommend establishing clear expectations, including an employer telework policy and individual telework agreements that specify things like work hours and who will pay for equipment, office supplies, and internet access.

Lactation (Breastfeeding) Support
A legal requirement for all Colorado employers

A strong lactation program can be a win-win. When mothers who breastfeed feel comfortable expressing milk at work, they are more likely to return to work after maternity leave, and they return to work sooner.

Breastfed babies are healthier, which means mothers are less stressed and less likely to miss work. Because breastfed babies get sick less often, one-day absences from work are only half as common among mothers who breastfeed.[21]

Breastfeeding also has substantial health benefits for mothers, lowering their risk of diabetes, heart disease, breast cancer, depression and ovarian cancer, and helping them recover more quickly from childbirth.[22]

Federal law and Colorado law both require employers to accommodate nursing mothers in expressing breast milk at work as often as needed. While the federal and state requirements are slightly different, employers must comply with the requirements that are more protective of employees. Briefly, an employer must provide reasonable break

time and a private location, other than a toilet stall, for an employee to use in expressing milk for up to two years after the child is born. Employees may use paid or unpaid break time or meal time.[23]

While not legal requirements, as a practical matter, nursing mothers should also have a chair, a door that locks, an electrical outlet, access to a sink, and a place to refrigerate breast milk.

It is important to note that not all mothers are physically able to breastfeed or choose to breastfeed, and the employee's needs and privacy should be respected.

Workplaces of all sizes and types have successfully accommodated nursing mothers. The womenshealth.gov website (see the Resources on page 23) has extensive examples showing how employers in various industries—including retail and mining— found time and private space to support nursing mothers.

Employer example:

While space in a retail establishment is always at a premium, Whole Foods Market in Denver's Cherry Creek neighborhood has set aside a small room for nursing mothers. The room contains amenities such as a chair, an electrical outlet, a sink with running water, a refrigerator, and antimicrobial wipes.[24]

Other options employers can consider to accommodate nursing mothers include:

- Allowing the nursing mother to take break time to go to the baby, or allow a caregiver to bring the baby to the workplace for feeding.

- Telework, with the understanding that the employee has a caregiver to look after the baby between feedings.

- A "baby at work" or "infant at work" program, allowing parents to bring babies to their offices or other workplaces until the babies reach the age of six to eight months or start to crawl, whichever comes first. A clear policy should outline parents responsibilities and co-worker expectations. The Parenting in the Workplace Institute has tracked more than 200 organizations—from government agencies and law firms to retail stores and credit unions—that have hosted 2,100 babies.

Stable, Predictable Schedules

Many employees, particularly low-wage and part-time workers, have schedules that change, sometimes dramatically, from week to week. Moreover, they sometimes don't know what their schedule will be until a few days in advance. Others work "on-call" and must be available to work but don't know whether they'll be called in. Sometimes managers change schedules at the last minute. All of these situations can create problems for employees and their families:

- Employees who are counting on full-time work struggle to make ends meet when they don't work 40 hours in a week.

- When employees spend money on transportation and child care, they can actually lose money when they are sent home before working a full shift.

- When an employee is expecting full-time work, or expecting a certain schedule, they aren't able to take a second job.

- Students who work part time aren't able to plan their classes (or keep their jobs) unless they have a predictable schedule.

- Child care providers may not be willing to save a place for a child that doesn't attend on a regular schedule, so parents with unpredictable schedules may need to find a new provider.

- Child care subsidies and other public benefits may depend on the number of hours a person works, the amount they

earn, and the number of days their child attends child care, so an unpredictable schedule will affect these benefits as well.

Creating a stable schedule, with a consistent number of hours and offering as much advance notice as possible of changes will reduce emotional and economic stress on employees and their families. Employers can save on turnover and associated recruitment and training costs and see an increase in employee morale and engagement.

Training Managers and Employees

Experts in family-friendly employment emphasize the importance of the manager's role in implementing a flexible workplace. One study concluded, "engaging managers is critical to the successful implementation of workplace flexibility." [25]

Ideally, managers will be involved throughout the process, from identifying issues to address, to generating possible solutions, to piloting and implementation. Along the way, managers may need to adopt a new frame of mind regarding their role in supervising and evaluating employees. For those who are used to evaluating employees based on seeing them working, the transition to evaluation based on results may require some coaching.[26, 27]

Similarly, employees who work a compressed work week or work offsite for part of the week may need help with new issues, such as working out a communication routine with their teammates and supervisor.

Training can build these new skills, answer questions, and inform both managers and employees about performance goals they are expected to meet. Training might be conducted separately for managers and employees at first, and then in teams so managers and employees can agree on what they need from each other to do their best work.

CORE BENEFITS

Financial security supports a family's physical, social, and emotional health. For parents, basic resources provided by a living wage and supportive benefits allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. (A living wage, distinct from the minimum wage, is one that allows an employee to meet basic needs based on costs in a specific community, maintaining a decent standard of living.)

Increasing benefits may be even more cost-effective for employers and employees than providing a raise in salary. By offering a non-taxable benefit rather than an increase in salary, the employer avoids paying additional FICA, state unemployment insurance, and workers compensation insurance. The employee avoids paying income taxes on additional income while still receiving a valuable benefit.

Note: The following is a general description of some common benefit options. It is not intended to be legal or tax advice. Consult your CFO or tax specialist.

Health Insurance

The Affordable Care Act requires employers with at least 50 employees to provide reasonably priced health insurance to full-time employees, but not to employees who work less than 30 hours a week. Companies with fewer than 50 full-time employees are not required to provide health insurance at all. Employees who are not covered need to apply for Medicaid or buy their own insurance on the state exchange.

Health insurance is a core benefit that contributes to the financial stability and well being of employees and their families. Preventative care reduces absenteeism and lost productivity. Family-friendly employers make every effort to provide health benefits.

Even for employers who already provide health insurance, it's worth looking at what adjustments may provide lower premiums, lower co-pays or smaller deductibles, based on employee needs. Employees may be struggling to pay family premiums, putting off appointments to avoid co-pays or unable to afford care due to large deductibles. If so, there may be different policies that are more suitable to employees at your organization. Especially for those with families, the cost of premiums and the higher family deductibles can be significant obstacles.

Some employers have switched to providing a fixed, monthly health insurance subsidy – a "defined contribution plan" - that allows employees to purchase their own insurance on a private or corporate health insurance exchange. This may be worth exploring if employees have a variety of needs and preferences.

Smaller employers can provide a small business plan from options in the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) on Colorado's health insurance marketplace, Connect for Colorado, or allow employees to choose from the options there.

Dental and Vision Insurance

As with other health insurance, dental and vision insurance allow employees to receive preventative care for themselves and their families. Preventative care can reduce absenteeism. Insurance also lessens the potential risk of a major expense that jeopardizes family economic stability.

Section 125 "Cafeteria Plans"

Cafeteria plans allow employees to use pre-tax salary to pay for health and dependent care expenses, which reduces their taxable income and increases their take-home pay. Employers do not pay FICA, workers' compensation insurance, or unemployment insurance on the share of the employee's income that goes into the plan.

Here are some examples of cafeteria plan components:
- Pre-tax health insurance premiums
- Health Flexible Spending Arrangements (FSAs)
- Health Savings Accounts (HSAs)
- Dependent Care Flexible Spending Arrangement

Other financial benefits that support the financial stability of employees and their families:
- Short-term disability insurance
- Life insurance
- Retirement benefits
- Transportation benefits such as a commuter transit pass

For descriptions of a range of taxable and non-taxable benefits, see *IRS Publication 15-B, Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits*, and consult your CFO or tax specialist.

PAID LEAVE

Sick leave

In Colorado, 816,000 workers - 42% of the workforce - earn no paid sick leave.[28] They must go to work sick or lose a day's pay. For the one in five Coloradans in low-wage jobs, one day's pay can be essential to cover basic living expenses, such as rent or groceries.[29] In some low-wage jobs, calling in sick can lead to losing a job, which places even more pressure to work when sick.

In a family where all adults are working, parents without sick leave face a difficult decision when a child is ill. Child care for sick children is difficult to find and expensive. If the parent must miss work, he or she endangers the family's financial stability. In 2015, a single parent with two children working full time and earning $10 per hour would have fallen below the federal poverty line for the month by taking a single unpaid sick day.[30] Some parents send a sick child to school, some leave the sick child home alone, and others keep an older child home from school to care for the one who is sick.[31]

Workers whose employers allow them to earn paid sick leave can recover from their own illness or care for a sick child without losing crucial income. They can seek preventative care for themselves and their children, reducing the risk of more serious illnesses.

A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 12% of U.S. food workers (among those least able to earn sick leave) had worked at least two shifts with flu-like symptoms during the previous year, illustrating one of the reasons that paid sick leave is a public health issue.[32]

For employers, offering paid sick leave reduces the spread of illness in the workplace (both to co-workers and to clients or customers). Sick leave also reduces "presenteeism," where employees are present but unproductive at work due to illness. Healthy workers, especially in fields where occupational injuries are common, are less likely to be injured on the job than those who are working while sick.[33] In addition, paid sick time policies increase employee morale and job satisfaction.

The cost of turnover has been estimated at 10 to 30 percent of an employee's annual salary, so the savings of employee retention can be considerable.[34]

Vacation Time
Vacation time allows employees to recharge mentally and physically and enables families to rest and spend time together. Employees with paid vacation leave have lower rates of stress and depression.[35]

Even when an employer provides paid vacation leave, there may be subtle pressure from managers not to use it. This is counterproductive. The Society for Human Resource Management has found that employers that encourage employees to take their vacation time see a reduction in turnover, workers compensation claims and health care costs, as well as an increase in productivity.[36] Some employers believe that vacation time is important enough to productivity that they require employees to take a minimum amount of vacation time each year.[37]

Personal leave
Some employers provide personal leave, or general leave, for purposes such as appointments or events at a child's school, or other types of personal business that may not be covered by other types of leave. As parental involvement in a child's education is closely connected to the child's academic achievement,[38] supporting a parent's involvement in a child's school activities offers an important family-friendly benefit.

Paid Time Off (PTO)
Employers are increasingly offering paid time off (PTO) rather than separately tracking sick time, vacation time and personal time. Combining time off into PTO doesn't only reduce recordkeeping time for employers,

it may reduce unscheduled absences. Since employees can determine how to use their time off, they may be more likely to arrange absences in advance and less likely to call in sick when they need time off for personal business.

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
FMLA is a federal law requiring organizations with more than 50 employees to offer eligible employees a period of job-protected, unpaid leave to care for themselves or family members under specific circumstances. Health insurance, if provided, must be continued. However, recently hired employees and employees who work for smaller organizations are not covered under FMLA. FMLA is gender-neutral, so eligible men and women can take medical or caregiving leave.

Employees who are eligible often can't afford to take unpaid time off. An analysis of 2012 Department of Labor survey data found that nearly one in four women who took leave to have a baby was back at work within two weeks. Nearly half of those took only a week or less.[39]

For covered employers, FMLA is a minimum requirement, and employers can provide more support (such as paid leave and/or longer leave) to employees.

For employers, paid leave results in improved recruitment, retention, and employee morale.[40]

While there are benefits to providing paid family and medical leave to all employees who need it, we'll highlight benefits of paid parental leave and paid elder care leave.

Paid Parental Leave
Paid parental leave gives birth mothers the ability to take sufficient time to recover from childbirth. For all parents, it allows them time to bond with and care for a newborn or newly adopted child.

For birth mothers and their babies, paid maternity leave offers a host of health benefits. Paid maternity leave is associated with lower infant mortality rates.[41] Mothers are more likely to breastfeed, and to breastfeed longer, which benefits both mothers and babies. Women who delay their return to work after giving birth are less likely to suffer from depression. Both breastfeeding and the ability to take longer leave are associated with lower rates of child abuse and neglect.[42]

For all parents—fathers, same-sex parents, and adoptive parents—the ability to take parental leave allows closer bonding with the new child, helping with the child's brain development and laying the foundation for future health, relationships, and the ability to learn. The establishment of a safe, stable, and nurturing relationship is crucial for a child to thrive and grow into a happy, healthy, and productive adult.

When both parents are able to take leave, a two-income couple can take leave in turns, giving a child a longer bonding period with his or her primary caregivers.

Of course, parents with partial or fully paid leave are more financially stable, as well. When a new mother is financially able to take a longer leave, she is less likely to require public assistance and her family's income is less likely to drop below the poverty level.[43] She is more likely to return to work, and return to the same employer. The length of leave is also associated with retention.

Employer example:

Google found that, even with paid parental leave, their turnover rate for new mothers was twice as high as for other employees. To counter this, the company increased maternity leave in 2007 from 12 to 18 weeks and changed it from partial pay to full pay. Attrition decreased by 50 percent.[44]

Along with the need for parental bonding, the ability for both men and women to take paid parental leave is a factor in pay equity. When only mothers can take parental leave, the result can be reluctance among employers to hire or promote women of childbearing age, and the creation of a "mommy track" with long-term consequences for women in the workplace. Taking time off for the birth of a child creates a pause in a woman's career and earning trajectory that can be difficult to recover from.

Millennials, in their prime childbearing years, are particularly interested in flexibility and paid parental leave benefits. A 2015 survey by Ernst and Young found that millennials – now America's largest generation—are more likely to take paid parental leave and are taking longer leaves than previous generations. Results indicated that flexibility and paid parental leave were more likely to improve recruitment and increase engagement and retention with millennials than with earlier generations. [45]

Employer example:

Beginning in 2016, employees of Western Union, located in Douglas County with offices worldwide, can take 12 weeks of fully paid maternity leave. Previously, Western Union

offered mothers up to six weeks off at roughly two-thirds their normal pay. That could be supplemented with other available paid time off. Before the change, employees took an average of six to eight weeks off after the birth of a child. After considering many factors, including feedback from employees who had taken maternity leave before, Western Union made the decision to expand their paid leave policy. Expanding the policy allows Western Union to compete with other companies in the financial technology sector for attracting and retaining top talent. Currently, the expanded leave applies only to mothers, but Western Union is trying out parental leave for spouses and partners at other offices.

Paid Elder Care Leave

Elder care leave will become increasingly important as our population ages. Just as parental leave affects more millennials, elder care tends to be a bigger concern for Generation X families. A study of working couples in the "sandwich generation" found that the strategies they use to accommodate the demands of caretaking take a toll on their mental health, financial stability, and their performance on the job.[46] Elder care creates family stress, particularly when there is work-life conflict, and this is both a health and productivity issue for employees.[47]

Along with reducing stress on employees, paid leave for elder care also provides benefits to seniors who receive care from families, allowing them to stay in their homes longer and return there sooner after an illness or accident.

Elder care is a retention issue for employers, as caretakers without paid leave are more likely to leave the workforce entirely.[48]

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES AND RESOURCES

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

An Employee Assistance Program, provided through an employer, offers short-term counseling, referrals, and other services to employees who have work-related or personal problems. These problems may include stress, grief, relationship issues, financial difficulties, substance abuse, and mental illness. EAPs also help managers and offer mediation to address communication difficulties and resolve conflicts. An EAP may provide referrals to child and elder care resources.

Employer example:

A 2015 study of the Colorado State Employee Assistance Program found that clients of the EAP program showed significant reductions in depression, anxiety, absenteeism, and presenteeism compared to similar employees who did not receive EAP services.[49]

Child Care

For working parents, reliable and affordable child care is essential.

According to Childcare Aware of America, more than 245,000 Colorado children younger than six potentially need child care, as both of their parents (or one parent, in single-parent families) are in the workforce.[50]

However, child care in Colorado is among the most expensive in the country, relative to median income. Parents pay more to place an infant or a four-year-old in a child care center for a year than they would for a year of in-state tuition at a four-year public university. At median income, a family with one infant in a child care center spends 15%

of their income, and a single mother spends nearly half (47%) her income, on child care. Home-based child care costs less, but is still more than $8,000 per year for an infant or four-year-old, and more than $4,000 for a school-aged child.

Low-income working families can apply for a partial state child care subsidy through the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). However, not all families qualify, funds are limited, and many providers don't accept the subsidized rate.

To add to the challenge, it can be difficult to find an opening at a center or child care home, particularly for an infant. In less-populated rural areas, long distances between a parent's workplace and a child's caregiver can be another barrier. Employees with varying and unpredictable schedules, and those who work evenings or weekends, may need to piece together child care with help from family, friends, and neighbors.

The bottom line: all parents want high quality, reliable care for their children. In order to stay employed, succeed at their jobs, and provide for their families, they struggle to make all of the pieces fit.

To retain valuable employees and foster high productivity, employers can support employees by providing resources, increasing access to child care, and/or assisting with costs.

Here are a few of the many options for supporting employee child care needs.

Resource and Referral Services

Colorado's child care resource and referral agencies, through Qualistar, (www.qualistar.org) provide employees with referrals to

available child care providers and help employees evaluate and choose good quality child care. In addition, many employee assistance programs offer assistance with locating child care and elder care.

Back-up or Emergency Care

Employers provide choices for short-term care of employees' children when regular care arrangements fall through, such as when a provider is sick or during unexpected school closings. Back-up care can be provided on-site or through contracts with providers.

Employer example:

Parents working at Janus Capital in Denver have access to two backup child care options, arranged by the company, in the event of situations such as school closures or sickness:
•   In-center backup child care, for well children ages 6 weeks to 12 years.
•   In-home backup care for children from birth to 17 years

Sick Child Care

Employers can provide in-home or center-based care for children who are mildly ill or recovering from a health problem that keeps them from attending school or their usual child care arrangement. Some employers allow a parent to bring a mildly ill child to work with them, if there's a quiet room or empty office, so the parent can keep an eye on the child while working.

Dependent Care Flexible Spending Arrangement

As part of a cafeteria plan benefit (discussed above), employers provide the option of saving before-tax salary for paying eligible child care or elder care expenses.

Some other options for helping employees include:

- Odd hour care, for employees who don't work 9 to 5.
- Before/After school programs
- Summer camp and school holiday care
- Child care subsidies, such as a voucher or reimbursement program
- On-site or near-site child care center
- Partnering with other employers

Elder Care Assistance

As with child care assistance, employers may offer assistance to those with elder care needs with referrals, including those available through their EAP, a dependent care spending arrangement, subsidies, or direct services.

Lunch & Learns and Support Groups

Some employers provide lunch & learn sessions with topics such as parenting issues or stress reduction. Caregiver support groups are a workplace option that can reduce employee stress. Small employers might join with others in the neighborhood to host such groups.

Career Development

Employees at all levels are interested in advancing in their careers, whether that means a worker in a retail job asking to be cross-trained so he can pick up more shifts or a manager seeking a mentor to help her move into an executive position.

Career development programs are a win-win. Employers benefit not only through employees' increased knowledge and skills on the job, but also through improved employee engagement and retention.

Employees and their families benefit from increased earnings, greater job security, and higher satisfaction.

What does it look like in practice?

- Onsite or offsite professional development (e.g., communication, assertiveness, time management, conflict resolution, personnel management)
- Formal mentoring programs
- Tuition reimbursement
- Cross-training for front-line staff
- Promoting from within
- Lunch & Learn workshops
- Paid professional organization memberships
- Allowing volunteer commitments during the work day

Community Involvement

Truly family-friendly employers support initiatives in the community and at the policy level that will promote the health of families.

Consider assisting community initiatives and organizations that promote the interests of working families.

For example, employers that are already providing paid sick days, predictable schedules, or paid family leave might back local ordinances or legislation that requires these as a way to level the playing field for local businesses while supporting the well-being of families in the community.

Another way to promote the health of families in your community is to contribute to Colorado's Child Care Contribution Tax Credit, www.coloradokidstaxcredit.org. Business and individual taxpayers that make a monetary contribution to qualified child care and early education programs in Colorado may claim a state income tax credit of 50% of the total qualifying contribution. Consult your CFO or tax advisor.

Here are some steps to making family-friendly changes in your workplace.

Determine Your Business Goal

Is there a problem that needs solving? For example, does your organization have a problem with turnover? Is there a high rate of absenteeism? Are employees complaining about a lack of flexibility? Is your organization new and growing? Or have circumstances presented an opportunity, such as an upper management decision to help employees improve the fit between work and their personal lives? If so, use this as a starting point. You might consider other changes as you continue the process.

Family-friendly policies will be more sustainable if they are grounded in your business strategy. While a flexible workplace certainly benefits employees and their families, that can't be the only reason for adopting it. Rather than presenting these policies as favors or privileges, consider them part of your overall human resources strategy, contributing to employee recruitment, retention, engagement, health, and safety.

Pull Together Your Team

A solid, representative team or task force will provide more complete information, bring forward varied ideas, and consider each idea from a variety of perspectives. It will help create buy-in. Make sure the team represents everyone who needs to be at the table. Include a manager and representative employees, including those who are part-time and hourly. Think about including someone from facilities management and IT. If there is a union, make sure to coordinate with the representative to avoid any conflicts with the contract.

The presence of a senior manager, at least at the first meeting, emphasizes the value of employees to the organization and encourages buy-in.

Make sure everyone on the team understands the purpose of the task and any limits to the team's authority.

Assess What You Have Now

What types of policies and benefits does the organization have in place already?

When Work Works, an initiative of the Families and Work Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management, offers a free online assessment and benchmarking report on their website: http://www.whenworkworks.org/workflex-assessment

Health Links, a signature program of the Center for Health, Work, & Environment at the Colorado School of Public Health, offers a healthy business assessment that also collects data about family-friendly workplace policies. For more information, visit www.healthlinkscertified.org.

Assess Employee Needs

Determine what your team needs to know to move forward. If there's a specific issue to address, what data will help you find a solution? For example, if management is concerned about turnover, you'll want to gather data on employee satisfaction and reasons for leaving, so you might use data from exit interviews or survey current employees about what they like and don't like about their jobs.

Don't underestimate the value of simply asking other employees what their

challenges are and what would help them. However, realize that people may be more candid on an anonymous survey.

You can include questions about employee needs in an organizational climate survey, if you normally do one.

Be extremely careful to ensure confidentiality. Surveys should be anonymous and ask no identifying questions. In a small organization (fewer than 50 employees), even the ages of children may make a survey respondent identifiable to others. If your organization can afford it, you may be able to hire a third party to conduct a survey. If in doubt about whether a question is too personal or may produce responses that are identifiable, leave it off. Aside from protecting the privacy of employees, a truly anonymous survey will produce more responses.

The *Employee Work-Life Survey* from Portland State University not only offers a comprehensive set of survey questions, but also contains a wealth of information about conducting a needs assessment. Some questions ask for information that might be easily linked to respondents in a small organization, but most questions can be modified to ask for more general information (age range rather than age, for example). The survey is included in *Supporting Employees with Child and Elder Care Needs*,[51] which can be downloaded here: http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/portals/0/Employers_Sourcebook.pdf

When Work Works has published *Workflex: The Essential Guide to Effective and Flexible Workplaces*, available at the Society for Human Resource Management bookstore: https://store.shrm.org/workflex-the-essential-guide-to-effective-and-flexible-workplaces.html

It is also available in electronic format from Amazon.com.

The guide includes a "Diagnostic Toolkit" with qualitative and quantitative measures and sample questions for surveys and focus groups.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension's site, Balancing Work and Family Care of Older Persons focuses on elder care issues rather than more general needs. It links to a web-based Employed Caregiver Survey. Once registered, your employees take the survey, and the site produces a report with recommendations for your workplace: http://articles.extension.org/pages/27975/employed-family-caregiver-survey

If a specific solution is already under consideration, you might ask people whether they would be likely to take advantage of that flexibility or benefit if it were offered.

Note: Make sure not to raise hopes by offering a potential solution that leadership hasn't approved. If you are only gathering information, be very clear about that.

Prioritize Issues and Research Possible Solutions

Use the references at the end of this Toolkit as a starting point to explore the options in more depth. You don't need to re-invent the wheel. On the other hand, don't try to read every source before you start to implement. There is a vast amount of material on work-life issues, so don't let it overwhelm and paralyze your efforts.

It may be helpful to consider the relative costs of problems and solutions. The Society for Human Resource Management hosts a free, online calculator that allows employers to calculate absenteeism or turnover costs

free, online calculator that allows employers to calculate absenteeism or turnover costs and estimate how much might be saved by implementing a specific work-life program. Find the calculator at http://www.hrcosting.com/hr/[52]

Take time to consider the variety of issues the organization is facing, or will face in the near future. Some important organizational issues may affect, or be affected by, new policies.
• A growing organization's crowded office space could be a cue to think about a telework policy.
• A vacancy in an office building might create an opportunity for onsite child care.
• A need for more coverage in the early morning or late afternoon might be a rationale for flexible scheduling.

Remember to consider benefits that meet the needs of employees without children. Every employee has a family. Assistance that isn't specifically targeted to parents, such as elder-care resources or even pet insurance, can reduce employee stress.

Create a Plan

Agree on what to implement, and then prioritize. A small success may be just what you need to get the program off to a solid start. It will give the group credibility and a morale boost to tackle a more ambitious item next.

Develop a detailed plan with a timeline and some research on the benefits of the program or policy will help with this.

Determine how you will implement the new program or policy. Depending on what you're implementing, you might pilot it for a period and then evaluate to fine tune it before full

implementation.

Don't forget these two crucial pieces of your implementation plan:

• Communication/Marketing: Your implementation plan will need to include steps for communicating or marketing to employees. How will you publicize the availability of the program/policy and how to take advantage of it?
• Evaluation: Build an evaluation step into your plan. Monitoring and periodic evaluation provides an opportunity to further tailor a policy or program and will give you the greatest chance for success. Determine how and when you will evaluate how the program/policy is working. How will you track how many employees are using it and how it's working for them? Can your human resources department track the data you need? Will you use a short survey? When will you collect the data and when will you review it?

Implement

Remember to implement your communication plan and collect data as you go, so you'll be able to evaluate.

A few key reminders, whether you are piloting or rolling out a complete program:

• Assess employee needs regularly and listen to feedback – Make sure the new program is working for employees. Even when a program has been in place for a long time, it's important to check in. Particularly in a small organization, policies that are valuable today may become less useful as turnover occurs or employees enter new phases of life.

• Communicate options to employees frequently – Remember that benefits and policies, such as family leave and lactation support, that seem irrelevant to an employee on her first day may become important and useful just a couple of years later.

• Senior leadership participation and modeling is crucial – Without clear signals from senior management, employees may wonder whether using family leave or flex-time will hurt their careers. A work-life expert suggests that a family-friendly boss should serve as a role-model: "If your employees see you occasionally shifting hours, or using technology to work at a distance, they will feel more comfortable asking to do the same."

Evaluate
Review the data you've collected. If the program isn't working as you expected, try to figure out what's going wrong. You may need to talk with some fellow employees to hear about their experiences. Can the program be adjusted, rather than starting over?

Once the program is working as expected, remember to document the impact to ensure sustainability.

Congratulations! Start over again with your next plan!

Family-friendly employment doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes a small change can provide big benefits for employees and the organization.

Organizations across the country have found that, when a small amount of flexibility has increased employee satisfaction and enhanced mutual trust within the organization, it makes business sense to go further.

We wish you the best of luck with your family-friendly workplace!

There are many excellent resources on family-friendly employment. Here are some of our favorites. All resources are free unless otherwise noted.

General Family-Friendly Employment Resources:
Supporting Employees with Child and Elder Care Needs: A Work-Family Sourcebook for Employers. Neal, M. B., & Hammer, L. B., with Brockwood, K., Caubet, S., Colton, C., Hammond, T., Huang, E., Isgrigg, J., & Rickard, A. (2001, June). Portland State University. http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/portals/0/Employers_Sourcebook.pdf

Workflex: The Essential Guide to Effective and Flexible Workplaces
(There is a cost for this resource.)
https://store.shrm.org/workflex-the-essential-guide-to-effective-and-flexible-workplaces.html
The guide is also available in electronic format from Amazon.com:
https://www.amazon.com/Workflex-Essential-Effective-Flexible-Workplaces-ebook/dp/B009UOMQF4/

When Work Works Guide to Bold New Ideas
Online, searchable database of award-winning employers and their practices.
http://www.whenworkworks.org/search-recipients

University of Wisconsin-Extension. *Balancing Work and Family Care of Older Persons*
http://fyi.uwex.edu/balancingcare/
See also the web-based Employed Caregiver Survey, which produces a report with recommendations for your workplace: http://articles.extension.org/pages/27975/employed-family-caregiver-survey

The Society for Human Resource Management's free, online calculator that allows employers to calculate absenteeism or turnover costs and estimate how much might be saved by implementing a specific work-life program: http://www.hrcosting.com/hr/

Workflex guides from When Work Works by business size/industry:
When Work Works is an initiative of the Families and Work Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management

Small Business
http://www.whenworkworks.org/downloads/workflex-and-small-business-guide.pdf

Health Care
http://www.whenworkworks.org/downloads/workflex-and-health-care-guide.pdf

Manufacturing
http://www.whenworkworks.org/downloads/manufacturing-guide.pdf

Retail, Service, and Hospitality
http://www.whenworkworks.org/downloads/workflex-in-retail-service-hospitality-guide.pdf

Managing in a Flexible Workplace
Matos, K., & Weisberg, A. Workflex and Managers Guide: Setting You and Your Team Up for Success. (2016). When Work Works. http://www.whenworkworks.org/downloads/workflex-and-managers-guide.pdf

Cavanaugh, K., Fraone, J. S., & Kacher, K. (2014). National Workplace Flexibility Study. https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/research/highlights/pdf/NWFS-Report-012014.pdf

Flexibility (Time flexibility or Telework)
Workflex and Telework Guide (When Work Works)
http://www.whenworkworks.org/be-effective/guides-tools/telework-guide

Denver Regional Council of Governments/Way To Go Program
Work schedule options and telework program assistance
http://www.waytogo.org/for-employers/employer-services
For employers in the seven-county Denver Metro area

Employee Assistance Programs
Employee Assistance Society of North America (EASNA)
Selecting and Strengthening Employee Assistance Programs: A Purchaser's Guide. (2009).
http://www.easna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/EASNA-PURCHSERS-GUIDE-TO-EAPs-FINAL-102209.pdf

An Employer's Guide to Employee Assistance Programs
https://www.easna.org/documents/PS2-NBGRecommendationsforDefiningandMeasuringEAPs.pdf

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
 U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division
Guidance and fact sheets
https://www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/

Lactation/Breastfeeding Support
Support for Nursing Moms at Work: Employer Solutions
http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/employer-solutions/index.html

United States Breastfeeding Committee. Workplace Accommodations to Support and Protect Breastfeeding. Washington, DC: United States Breastfeeding Committee; 2010.
http://www.usbreastfeeding.org/p/cm/ld/fid=196

The Business Case for Breastfeeding for Business Managers
http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/government-in-action/business-case-for-breastfeeding/business-case-for-breastfeeding-for-business-managers.pdf

Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, Break Time for Working Mothers
http://www.dol.gov/whd/nursingmothers/

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Workplace Accommodations for Working Mothers
https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/NursingMothers

Boulder County Breastfeeding Friendly Employer information, including self-assessment
(The self-assessment is for a Boulder County employer award, but it is a useful tool.)
http://www.bouldercounty.org/family/pregnancy/pages/bfemployers.aspx

Parenting in the Workplace Institute
http://www.babiesatwork.org/

Washington State Department of Health - Infant at work program
(The Department's internal procedures, policies, and forms are downloadable.)
http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/WorksiteWellness/InfantsatWorkPolicy

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www.FamilyFriendlyColorado.com

✴ **Assess Workplace Culture**
Fill out the Family Friendly Addendum online to get feedback and identify priority areas for your workplace

✴ **Build a Family Friendly Workplace**
Connect with EPIC and Health Links to support your needs
- Visit www.ColoradoEPIC.org
- Visit www.HealthLinksCertified.org

✴ **Connect to Like-Minded Businesses**
Discover how workplaces across Colorado are supporting their employees in all stages of life through direct referrals

✴ **Visit the Website to Get Started**
It's fast and easy, www.FamilyFriendlyColorado.com

Supported by Colorado's Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), Health Links and EPIC have established a key partnership to connect businesses to each other and to resources that will help employees thrive at home, in the workplace, and in their communities.