

Working Daughter

Managers: Here Are 10 Things Your Caregiving Employees Need From You Now

Your workforce is caring for aging parents – you may not know it – but it’s happening. More than 1 in 6 working Americans assist with the care of an elderly or disabled family member, relative, or friend, and comprise up to 22 percent of the workforce.

These working daughters and sons suffer work-related difficulties due to their dual roles. And businesses suffer too. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost to businesses from caregivers leaving the work force was an estimated \$3.3 billion.

Supporting caregiving employees can help you retain your workforce, attract new talent, and build a strong and healthy culture. So, what do working daughters, and sons, need at work? Here are 10 simple suggestions.

- 1. Acknowledge the elder caregivers.** Eldercare is too often invisible in the workplace and that invisibility leads to working caregivers feeling isolated and othered. Signal to your caregiving employees that you are aware they exist and open to supporting them. Via emails or during staff meetings, or better yet both, acknowledge that your workforce may be wrestling with caregiving issues right now and that you have programs in place to help.
- 2. Offer benefits that actually help people balance family and work.** Survey your employees and ask them what kind of assistance they want. Don’t assume you know who the caregiving employees are, or what they need. A report from Harvard Business School (HBS) revealed there is a “gross misalignment” between the benefits caregiving employees want and the benefits employers provide.

- 3. Apply benefits equally to childcare, eldercare, spousal care, etc.** Make sure working daughters and sons know that your policies and benefits apply to them as well as to working parents by creating policies for “family caregivers.” If, for example, you offer affordable backup childcare, you should offer affordable back up adult day care too. As important as offering these benefits, is communicating them to all employees.
- 4. Create a community.** Savvy businesses have support groups for working parents; you need the same for workers with parents. The aforementioned HBS report also stated that more than 90 percent of employees, when asked, “How important are caregiving support groups/networks to the decision to stay with your organization?” said “Very” or “Quite” important. Do you have an ERG for working daughters and sons?
- 5. Consider a mentor program.** No two eldercare situations are the same, and no two employees will approach their caregiving responsibilities in the same way. That being said, having a peer to talk with about the challenges of eldercare can go a long way in helping a caregiving employee.
- 6. Allow work-from-home, or other flexible options.** If COVID taught us anything about work, it’s that not everyone needs to be on-site to do their job. Many people can successfully and productively work from home. Let them. If your business can’t support work from home operations, consider allowing employees to commute during off-peak hours, create flexible schedules, and job share so they have the flexibility they need to be available to their families. Flexibility is critical for caregivers. It can mean the difference between shifting a schedule for an hour to accommodate a home health aide’s schedule or taking a few hours off to bring a parent to a medical appointment, rather than taking an entire day off.
- 7. Offer referrals and subsidies for eldercare services.** Caregivers often struggle to find convenient and reliable help and resources for their aging parents. But it doesn't have to be this way - and you can help. Build a database of companies and services to which you can refer your employees - from financial planners to senior living referrals to concierge services to back-up eldercare. Even better, offer subsidies for these services.
- 8. Develop strong and compassionate leaders.** The simplest way to make your workplace more caregiver-friendly is to cultivate a culture of compassion. Understand that caregiving isn't just about time and tasks; it is an emotional and sometimes heartbreaking responsibility. Small and genuine gestures can go a long way in making a caregiver feel supported. Make sure your frontline managers are prepared to talk about eldercare.
- 9. Make it possible for people to not come to work sometimes.** Eldercare is unpredictable. Put programs and benefits in place so your caregiving employees don’t have to choose between missing some work and quitting altogether. Respite care, tax credits, better bereavement policies, long term care – are all useful tools in supporting working daughters and sons.

10. Provide paid leave. Sometimes your caregiving employees will need to take a significant chunk of time off to care for a parent. Make that possible. Helping your employees balance care and career results in a happier, motivated, more engaged workforce.

For information on how Working Daughter can help you care for your caregiving employees, email Mary@WorkingDaughter.com.