

Managing Working Parents

In today's society the workplace includes both men and women who are struggling to balance work and parenting responsibilities. Today, over 50 percent of families have two wage earners. Less than one-fifth of families are "traditional bread winner / homemaker families." People of the "Sandwich Generation" that are in their 30's, 40's, and 50's now find themselves squeezed between caring for their children and their elderly parents. Managing more numerous and complex work and family roles is stressful for many employees. They try to balance work and family responsibilities and frequently give up their personal time, leaving them worn out, frazzled and stressed.

What can you do as an employer?

Your company's success may depend on how effectively it recognizes and addresses the wide variety of challenges facing working parents. Companies and managers who don't learn to understand and accommodate the needs of their employees may encounter serious problems relating to employee loyalty, turnover, absenteeism, and stress.

- ◆ Get to know your employees.
- ◆ Understand and acknowledge their needs.
- ◆ Accept and act on a compromising plan.
- ◆ Provide support without removing the employees responsibility.

Flex and Alternative Work Hours

You can contribute to the success of young working parents as well as the "Sandwich Generation" all while uplifting the productivity of your company. Utilize flexible scheduling options that may include: early in, early out or late in, late out, part time, cross training - sharing job tasks, telecommuting or pick up and drop off work dates.

For example:

Sara the accountant has a 10-year-old and a 14-year-old that are active in after school sports. Sara could come in 2 hrs early and leave 2 hrs earlier on the days her kids have practice.

Jim is divorced and he has the chance to have his young children Friday – Sunday. Jim could work Monday-Thursday 8 to 10 hr schedules each day leaving him a full time and productive employee.

Carmen and Julie both work in the same department. Both are working parents who are finding it difficult balancing life between their work and family. This has caused added stress to both the work place and home life. Carmen and Julie could alternate days or they could alternate opening and closing leaving the peak hours covered by both of them. This would give each one a few more hours at home in the morning or evening to get the necessary household items taken care of.

Be flexible and creative in assisting workers who need to rearrange their schedules. Your EAP has a variety of strategies and services to help working parents cope with multiple demands. Stress management, parenting and personal counseling are some of the resources that can be activated. By supporting your employees' lives outside work, you can help them be more productive on the job.

For more information contact your Employee Assistance Program at 800-862-3398