

Toolkit for Employers



**Resources for Supporting Family
Caregivers in the Workplace**



How supportive is your business to your employed family caregivers?

“In the absence of a corporate culture supportive of caregiving, employees feel unable to share information about their caregiving responsibilities, and to seek support”.²⁰

Use the following checklist, adapted from an employee checklist created by VON Canada, to assess your business on a variety of key elements related to how supportive your current work environment is to your caregiving employees. How would your workplace rate?

Key Elements	Key Questions	Comments
Corporate Culture		
Culture	Does the workplace show corporate commitment and support for the balancing of work and caregiving, with the creation of an environment that lets staff know that the employer cares for them outside of work as well? How is this shown? (eg. through the initiation of work-family policies and programs, discussion of caregiving issues in newsletters, at staff meetings, wellness fairs.)	
Written Policies and Procedures	Are there written policies and procedures for managers and staff, outlining the process and conditions for granting flexible work arrangements, with the direction to give every consideration to such requests?	
Written Resources	Are written resources available that empower working caregivers to identify and use workplace caregiver benefits, and to communicate effectively with managers on caregiving issues?	
Management Training	Is there training for managers on the importance of helping employees to achieve a healthy work- family balance, with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear articulation of the "business case" for work-family policies; • training on how to implement effective work- family practices; and • how to problem-solve unique situations? 	

Key Elements	Key Questions	Comments
Corporate Culture cont'd		
Overall Evaluation of Managers' Support to Caregiving Employees	Is there a linkage of the performance evaluation and compensation of managers to their flexibility in assisting employees to address family caregiving responsibilities? How is this assessed (e.g. through feedback surveys from employees)?	
Direct Supervisor	What is the specific attitude of supervisors to flexible work arrangements and working creatively together to help balance work and caregiving responsibilities?	
Designated Staff Member	Is there a designated staff member to help employees understand benefits to which they may be entitled and to help problem-solve the balancing of work and family caregiving responsibilities?	
Team Approach	Is there promotion of a team approach at the work site, so that workload can be shared or adjusted as required in the team, and to assist with the provision of emotional support for caregiving employees?	
Definition of Family/Care Receiver/ Caregiver	Is the definition of family broad and inclusive (i.e. includes care of in-laws, all relatives with whom the employee lives, recognition of nonfamily, blended family, and extended family, etc.)?	
Flexible Work Arrangements		
	<p>What alternative work arrangements are available to caregiving employees? Are these included in collective agreements?</p> <p>Options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flex-time • Telecommuting • Job sharing • Compressed work week • Reduced hours of work 	

Key Elements	Key Questions	Comments
<i>Flexible Work Arrangements cont'd</i>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible schedules • Protected part time employment • Variety of extended unpaid leave arrangements with job guarantees on return • Personal days off • Time in lieu of overtime • Family leave (specified number of paid days per year). 	
<i>Information and Referral, Employee Supports</i>		
	<p>Does your workplace offer programs and services to support caregivers, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and referral to community services, including home care, long-term care, community support programs, respite care, legal assistance etc? • EAP Programs: employers should ensure through evaluation, that EAP providers make adequate provision for following through with services for family caregivers. • Access to private consultants for specific topics/advice (such as legal)? • Assistance in negotiating the service system, and identifying and accessing the resources needed for their caregiving situation? • Eldercare/dependent care programs that provide assistance with case management, financial and estate planning, legal services, and insurance paperwork and processing; and end of life planning? • Support groups? • Family life seminars? • Telephone hotlines? • Caregiver fairs? • Resource banks? 	

Key Elements	Key Questions	Comments
<i>Practical Assistance/Direct Care Services</i>		
	<p>Does your workplace offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct dependent care services (such as subsidizing costs of access to on-site or offsite day care)? • Insurance coverage/Extended health benefits for caregiving necessities, with a broad definition of home health care to cover rehabilitation, mental health services, home medical equipment, aids for daily living and services (nursing; home support; therapy)? • Emergency elder care? • Public/private partnerships of the employer and community caregiver services to develop caregiver support programs in which employers: (1) refer their employee caregivers to community services, and employee assistance programs that offer caregiver support and counselling; and (2) provide financial assistance to enable participation in programs (e.g. for day care)? • Flexible benefits plans, flexible spending accounts? 	
<i>Corporate leadership/advocacy in addressing the needs of family caregivers</i>		
	<p>Is the business involved in advocacy activities, through coalitions or working groups, to promote the development of legislation, supports, and benefits to assist caregivers, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of the Compassionate Care Benefits under EI? • At the provincial level, legislation to permit individuals to obtain an unlimited period of unpaid leave to care for a family member, with specific job guarantees on their return to work? 	

Key Elements	Key Questions	Comments
<i>Corporate leadership/advocacy in addressing the needs of family caregivers</i>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation (provincially) to provide full benefits to permanent part-time employees? • Amendments to provincial employment standards for Family Responsibility Leave, to grant employees specified paid leave to meet caregiving responsibilities? • Federal tax legislation that allows employers to make contributions towards the care of dependent family members, without such care being treated as a taxable benefit? • Promotion of new legislation that provides tax relief and subsidies to caregivers in recognition of home labour and lost opportunity costs? • Pension drop-out scheme similar to that which exists for child care in the CPP/QPP? • Increase in the level of benefits provided by income tax credits, to give meaningful relief to caregivers? • Promotion of direct subsidization of equipment? • Encouragement of corporate policy makers and benefits managers to use their market power to influence insurers to cover visiting nurse services, adult day care, respite care, other community caregiver programs etc., and to offer group long-term care insurance as an employee benefit? 	

How did your workplace/business rate? What do you need to implement to make your workplace more caregiver friendly?