

## Overview

Stark County employers want their employees to be fully focused on their jobs during regular work hours, plus many employers also expect employees to be available during “non-working” hours to answer emails, join video conference calls and complete urgent projects. Hourly employees are often expected to work mandatory overtime or be on call.

Meanwhile, many employees are overwhelmed by working while raising children; caring for elderly relatives; juggling irregular, part-time or extended work shifts; finding alternatives to employer-paid health insurance; and learning new skills to keep pace with fast-changing technologies at work.

The results of work-family stress are serious: reduced job performance, absenteeism, disengagement, anxiety and family crises.<sup>1</sup>

Family-friendly workplace policies make it possible for employees to more easily balance family and work – and fulfill both their family and work obligations.

Employers can increase employee engagement, loyalty, productivity and retention with family-friendly policies/practices. The benefits of family-friendly workplace policies are well documented.<sup>1,2</sup> Moreover, employers may earn tax credits by offering some family-friendly programs.<sup>4,5</sup>

Organizations looking for advice in evaluating and implementing family-friendly policies will find support through United Way of Greater Stark County, including case studies, local experts, research and forums that bring together interested organizations.

## Work-Family Stress has Increased in Recent Years

Work-family stress began to build in America when both parents or a single head of household held jobs and maintained their family responsibilities. Particularly for hourly employees, taking time off for personal reasons means no pay when they need to care for a sick family member, go to medical appointments, take elderly parents/children to appointments or attend special events at their children’s schools.

Cell phones, 24-hour global business operations and the increase of contract and part-time work (called the gig economy) have changed the relationships between work and family, stretching employees to meet multiple competing obligations.

At the same time, the phase-out of guaranteed pensions and comprehensive employer-paid healthcare, as well as the increasing prevalence and unpredictability of mid-career layoffs, removed traditional supports earlier generations had counted on.

There are really two dimensions of “family-friendly” policies:

1. **A family-friendly workplace or employer** is one whose policies make it possible for employees to more easily balance family and work, and to fulfill both their family and work obligations.
2. **Family-friendly government policies** are laws, regulations and social policies that recognize the importance of families to society, and are designed to meet – directly or indirectly – the needs of children, parents, disabled family members and the oldest generation.<sup>1</sup>

## Work-Family Trends and Insights

- 1 in 6 American employees work a “2<sup>nd</sup> shift” as family caregivers:
  - 70% have work-related difficulties due to their dual roles.
  - 24% say caregiving affects their work performance.
  - 50% of working caregivers are Millennials and GenXers.
  - 40% of caregivers are males.<sup>6</sup>
  - Many employees are in the “Sandwich Generation,” caring for children and elders.
- The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2018 allows employers to receive a credit on their tax liability if they extend at least partial compensation to employees who take family leave during 2018 and 2019.<sup>4,5</sup>
- 38% of Greater Stark County households (370,000 people) cannot afford basic necessities. This includes 12% of households who live below the poverty line and 26% of households who are Asset-Limited Income-Constrained Employed or what is known as ALICE workers.<sup>3</sup>
- Low-pay workers provide vital services – childcare, health care, security, retail services, manufacturing and more. These jobs are projected to grow at double or triple the rate of medium- and high-skilled jobs over the next decade across Ohio. 65% of the jobs created in Ohio pay less than \$20 per hour and of those 85% pay less than \$15 per hour.<sup>3</sup>

## Value of Family-Friendly Programs and Examples

For the mutual benefit of organizations and employees, employers need to understand the work-life needs of their employees and make changes to create Family-Friendly policies. There are many practical, proven ways to strengthen organizations, relieve stress and increase employees’ on-the-job effectiveness.

These improved results apply to both hourly and salaried employees.<sup>7</sup>

Value of family-friendly policies for employers:

## Position Paper for Family-Friendly Workplace Advocacy

1. Cost savings and higher profits through enhanced recruitment, improved employee performance, longer retention, less turnover, reduced absenteeism, better customer service and higher levels of customer satisfaction.
2. Higher productivity through better employee morale with more satisfied, committed and engaged employees. Dedicated employees lead to increased innovation, higher quality and growing market share.
3. Gender diversity and gender balance in leadership result when companies retain more talented women who advance within organizations.
4. Demonstrated success in other countries.
5. Job shopping? Family-Friendly policies impact workers' decisions to stay or move to another employer.

### Examples of family-friendly policies:

Numerous Family-Friendly policies can be implemented to enhance or even transform an employer's current workplace. Here are a few proven examples:

1. **Flex-time:** This may include job sharing, a compressed work week, shift work, teleworking, remote work or just the freedom to alter work hours when needed. All flexible work options empower employees by letting them arrange their work schedules to accommodate their business, family and personal needs. Popular options include a four-day -- rather than a five-day -- week; days off mid-week instead of on the weekend; or starting and ending the workday several hours earlier or later than normal.
2. **Parental leave for mom and dad:** Paid family-related leave options include adoption and maternity/paternity leave; medical leave and family leave to care for an elderly parent or a disabled or ill family member; and, short-term leaves to pick up a sick child at school or tend to one at home, attend a school performance or athletic event, or otherwise respond to urgent needs of a child or elderly parent.
3. **Employee and family health benefits:** Generous health and dental insurance is an important benefit. In addition, some employers provide on-site wellness centers, on-site fitness centers or subsidies for joining a gym, and even health-and-fitness-oriented programs for employees' children or spouses.
4. **Child care:** Consider child care onsite at your business or offer backup child care for days when an employee's regular child care provider is unavailable, or school is closed. Otherwise, employers can help defer the expense of child care by paying a portion of employees' day care fees at an off-site facility. Some employers develop formal partnerships with day care centers in their areas to

## Position Paper for Family-Friendly Workplace Advocacy

- receive top priority for employees' children. This helps employers control costs, while parents avoid the anxiety of dealing with waiting lists.
5. **Elder care:** Some employers provide resources and referrals for elder day care or home care. Some choose to subsidize such care.
  6. **Tuition for employee education/Scholarships for employees' children:** Employers may award one or more scholarships a year, on a merit or need basis, to the children of employees, or may actually pay or lend some amount of tuition for each employee's child who attends college.
  7. **Job sharing:** Two employees may share a single position, with each working a fraction of the necessary time. In that way, people can hold, or continue to hold, the positions they want, and still have time to spend with children or aging parents or take care of other family responsibilities.
  8. **Temporary or permanent switch to part-time:** A full-time employee might be allowed to change to a part-time position – either as part of a job share, or simply as a reduction in working hours – and continue in the same position. A new parent, for instance, may want to switch to part-time for the first year of a baby's life, to bond and spend time with the child, and adjust to the demands of parenthood.
  9. **Telecommuting/Allowing work away from the worksite:** An employee may work from home or some other remote site some or all the time. The employee may communicate and discuss work issues with colleagues and supervisors by spending particular days or a set amount of time at the worksite every week, or may "telecommute" by using telephone and new communications. Telecommuting allows people to work at locations anywhere in the world, regardless of the location of the actual workplace.
  10. **Family medical leave:** An employee would use this kind of leave to care for an aging parent or family member with a long-term illness, or to tend to personal chronic or temporary medical problems – anything from cancer treatments to arthroscopic surgery to mental health. Once again, it might be paid or unpaid, or some combination, and is usually limited to a certain number of weeks or months. Such a leave, in most cases, is also covered by the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).<sup>4</sup>
  11. **Flexible emergency leave:** This offers a certain number of days a year to attend to medical or other emergencies, usually with pay.
  12. **Family-oriented events:** Many employers arrange company picnics, holiday parties and other events to include employees' families.
  13. **Part-time career opportunities:** Employers may offer long-term career opportunities with growth and development for part-time employees.

## **14. Employee assistance programs that include family-issue counseling and workshops.**

### **Family-Friendly policies benefit employers**

Hiring, training and retaining quality employees are important to profitable businesses.

Today's employees have different needs and expectations from those of past decades, and employers need to have Family-Friendly policies to retain employees, particularly in times of low unemployment. On average, every time an entry-level employee leaves, it costs the organization more than \$2,000 in lost productivity, vacancy costs, hiring, training and ramp-up costs. (Women's Fund of Greater Cincinnati Foundation)

The business case for Family-Friendly policies that retain and motivate workers is strong and includes decreases in:

- 1) Absenteeism
- 2) Turnover
- 3) Job vacancies

Additional benefits of Family-Friendly policies include:

- 1) Capacity, productivity and customer service
- 2) Better employee retention and engagement
- 3) Increased ability to attract qualified applicants

While family-friendly policies are often focused on working parents, a major impact on employers is related to employees who care for elderly parents. A study by AARP found that 66 percent of working caregivers have had to make some adjustments to their work life, from reporting late to work to giving up work entirely. Moreover, 1 in 5 family caregivers have had to take a leave of absence.

Without family-friendly policies, employers will continue to struggle to recruit and retain employees which will impact their bottom-line. Family-Friendly workplace policies/practices can contribute to growth and prosperity in Stark County. Several major initiatives are in place to make Stark County a great place to work and grow businesses. Women United is available to provide valuable support to organizations that want to help employees handle their work and family obligations more effectively with less stress.

## Resources:

1. The Community Toolbox, Center for Community Health and Development, The University of Kansas [Promoting Family-Friendly Workplace Policies in Business and Government](#)
2. City and County of San Francisco, Department on the Status of Women, [Business case for Family-Friendly policies](#)
3. [United Way ALICE](#) - ALICE, an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, is a new way of defining and understanding the struggles of households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to afford a bare-bones household budget.
4. [The Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#) guarantees 12 weeks of unpaid leave for personal or family medical reasons, but only for employees in companies with a payroll of 50 or more. The guarantee is that when an employee takes such a leave, the job – and seniority – will be waiting for the person’s return.
5. [IRS Answers Questions on Paid Family and Medical Leave Tax Credit](#)
6. Care Giving in the US 2015 Report - [National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute](#)
7. Workplace Flexibility and Low Wage Workers - [Families and Work Institute](#) released in February 2011, analyzed data from FWI's National Study of the Changing Workforce. Low-wage employees were defined as those earning less than \$12.82 an hour—a little more than one-third of the U.S. workforce.

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