



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
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The Balancing Act of Working Caregivers

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Even though “work is the new retirement” for many, aging can bring health challenges that compromise independent elders and cast their adult children in the role of caregivers. It’s not just the elderly who need extra help.

Married or partnered people may end up caring for the other following an accident or serious illness, or caregiving may be required for a special needs family member, friend, or neighbor. From recent reports, it appears that family caregiving is increasingly more common and necessary, especially with the increasing costs of healthcare and related services. Consider these facts:

- Almost 50% of workers report having cared for an elderly relative or friend in the past 5 years
- Over 22 million people are providing unpaid caregiving annually in the U.S.
- In 3 out of 4 cases, only one family member is providing care for a loved one
- Though mostly unpaid work, one study estimated the value of caregiving at \$354 billion annually

Whether it comes on unexpectedly, from a stroke, cardiac event, or accident, or progressively through a debilitating illness, caregiving can blindside a working person and require shifting responsibilities both at home and work to manage the second job of daily caregiving.

This act of love not only impacts families—employers share the load. An average of 6.6 absences per caregiver per year add up to 126 million work days missed annually in the U.S. In addition to the challenge of reassigning work to accommodate time off, employers also feel financial consequences of the caregiving ripple effect.

The cost of absenteeism, turnover, presenteeism, reduction in full-time staffing, and supervisor time adds up to about a \$50 billion loss for American businesses. And because of the emotional and physical toll caregiving can take, employers can find themselves paying more in healthcare costs—one report estimates it at 8% more than the general population and about \$13.4 billion annually.

Providing life support for someone while trying to work and attend to one’s own family can be all-consuming and burnout is common. This can look like instances of depression, anxiety, poor concentration and sleep, irritability, mistakes on the job, and health issues. Knowing your employee is a caregiver can give you insight if you notice these symptoms of burnout at work. From this vantage point, you can offer a helping hand.

Support for caregivers should be two-fold: 1) information, resources, and tangible help for their loved one, and 2) professional services and emotional help for the caregiver. Here are a few places to start:

Your Employee Assistance Program

The EAP is here for emotional support and tangible resources. Employees can access a counselor 24/7 for telephonic support, or arrange for in-person counseling referrals to get help to cope. The EAP can also assist with free Legal, Financial, and Eldercare consultations for information and referrals to community agencies and programs.

Continued on the next page.

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Continued from the previous page.

The EAP website has useful articles on elder issues, legal forms (such as Durable Power of Attorney, Health Care Directive, and wills), budgeting tools, and webinars on stress reduction and self-care. Employees can call us anytime at (800) 777-4114 or visit the EAP website at www.firstchoiceeap.com. Please let us know if you need your company's username and we can assist.

www.caregiveraction.org

This website provides caregivers in varied situations—young people with disabilities, adults with debilitating illnesses, and decompensating elderly parents—practical information on Medicare, elder nutrition, managing medications and doctor appointments, and tips to deal with challenging situations. There are support groups, checklists and guides, instructional videos, links to professionals, and information about caring for a loved one with a specific disease such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, COPD and Huntington's.

www.wellspouse.org

This organization is dedicated to assisting spouses with support groups, organizations for financial assistance, information on end of life considerations, disability, government assistance, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's care consultants, and more.

Given this growing trend, you may be confronted with the necessity of caring for a loved one yourself, or supporting an employee through it. In either circumstance, your EAP will be here for support on this challenging road.

<https://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2014/ari-houser.html>

https://issuu.com/eapa/docs/jea_vol48no3rdqtr2018/4

<http://www.caregiveraction.org>



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