

CAREGIVER SUPPORT TOOLKIT FOR THE CARING EMPLOYER

**Policies and programs
to support employees in
the workplace**

Funded by the TX Department of
State Health Services

THE BUSINESS CASE

The number of caregivers in the workplace is growing as the US has seen an increase in caregivers of adults by almost 3 percent (See figure 1). Caregiving can take many forms, including caring for an older parent, a partner diagnosed with a serious illness, or a child living with a disability, and can arise at any time throughout an employee's career. In Austin and Travis County the number of people aged 65 and older is expected to more than double to 92 million over the next 50 years, and those 85 and older will likely triple to 18 million.¹ As demographics continue to move towards an older population, the number of individuals that are working caregivers (balancing work and caregiving responsibilities) will increase.

Research shows employers end up paying for the needs of working caregivers in one way or another. When needs are not addressed through employee wellness policies and programs, employers see higher rates of turnover, absenteeism, and loss of productivity.² A 2020 survey of top employers in the US found that most employers felt supporting family caregivers of adults improved their bottom line.³ Additionally, employers saw a 5% decrease in turnover of working caregivers when paid or unpaid family leave was offered.⁴ Providing support to caregivers within the workforce can look differently to every employer.

This toolkit aims to provide employers with a starting point for supporting working caregivers. In the following pages employers will find policies with sample language, program ideas, and other resources for caring for the caregiver. A special thanks to City of Austin Human Resources Department, City of Austin Equity Office, AGE of Central Texas, and TX Department of Health and Human Services for reviewing the toolkit and providing valuable feedback.

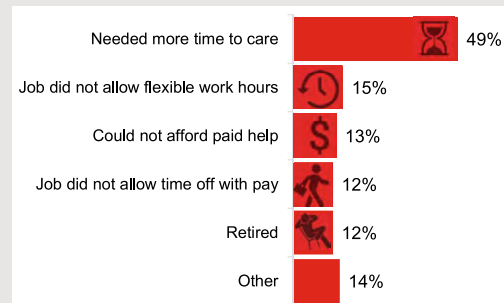
Figure 1. Prevalence of Caregiving by Age of Care Recipient, 2020 compared to 2015

Age	2020 Prevalence	Estimated Number of U.S. Adults Who Are Caregivers	2015 Prevalence	Estimated Number of U.S. Adults Who Are Caregivers
Overall	21.3%*	53.0 million	18.2%	43.5 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 0–17	5.7%*	14.1 million	4.3%	10.2 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 18+	19.2%*	47.9 million	16.6%	39.8 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 18–49	2.5%	6.1 million	2.3%	5.6 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 50+	16.8%*	41.8 million	14.3%	34.2 million

* Significantly higher than in 2015.

Caregiving in the US 2020 - AARP Research Report

Figure 2. Reasons Caregivers Stopped Working



N15. (If took leave of absence, gave up work, or retired early) Why did you leave your job, take a leave of absence, or otherwise decide to not work while also providing care?

2020 Base: Caregivers Who Took a Leave of Absence, Gave Up Work, Retired Early, or Used to Work More While Providing Care (n=276)

Note: Respondents may select more than one response; results add to greater than 100 percent.

Caregiving in the U.S. 2020 - AARP Research Report

¹ Age-Friendly Austin Action Plan Executive Summary, 2016

² Massachusetts Employer Toolkit to Support Working Caregivers. 2019. www.maroundtable.com/caregiving/MAEmployersToolkit.pdf

³ S&P Global and AARP. Companies Expand Family Friendly Policies but Focus Favors Parents Over Caregivers. 2020. www.spglobal.com/en/research-insights/featured/companies-expand-family-friendly-policies-but-focus-favors-parents-over-caregivers

⁴ The National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) and AARP. Caregiving in the U.S. 2020

Paid Family Leave

Provide a separate bank of paid leave hours designated for caring for a loved one. This accrued leave time is separate from sick, vacation and/or PTO days and to be used specifically for caring for a loved one. Alternatively, employers can create a policy that explicitly states employees can use existing sick days to care for a loved one or tend to their own mental health.

Sample language:

[EMPLOYER] is committed to a culture that helps our employees meet the demands of family and employment responsibilities. Offering our employees the option of taking paid time off when they or a family member is sick is not just good for our employees and their families, it's good for our business. Therefore, it is our policy to provide up to [#] weeks of paid family and medical leave in a 12-month period to eligible employees as defined below.

Eligibility

To be eligible for paid Family and Medical leave (PFML), an employee must:

- *Have been employed by [EMPLOYER] as a full-time or part-time employee (as defined by [EMPLOYER]) for [#] months before leave is to begin, and*
- *Require leave from work for a reason covered by the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act, as explained below.*

Reasons for Leave

An eligible employee can take PFML for any of the following reasons:

- *For the employee's own serious health condition;*
- *For the birth of the employee's child, and to care for the newborn child;*
- *For the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care; or*
- *To care for the employee's spouse, domestic partner, child, or parent who has a serious health condition.*

Flexible Work Schedule

Empower and encourage managers to be as flexible as possible. Many employees are juggling multiple priorities such as work, children, and caring for an aging adult. Flexibility can be offered in the number of hours worked per day or week, the number of days worked per pay period, or the location of where work takes place. Below is sample language for an employer who would like to provide multiple options to employees.

Sample language:

[Company/Organization]'s alternative work arrangement programs strive to offer flexibility to employees and managers. These programs allow managers to carry out essential business, while accommodating an ever-changing diverse work force. Department and program managers have the right to decide how to implement alternative work scheduling programs and are encouraged to work with their employees to meet both business and employee needs.

Flextime Options:

- *Daily Flex Schedule - a flexible schedule where the employee is free to set his/her own work hours within limits established by management.*
- *Compressed Workweek - a flexible schedule where a full workweek is completed in fewer than five days by increasing the number of hours worked per day. For example, four 10-hour shifts.*
- *5x4 Workweek - a flexible schedule where four days are worked in one week and five in the next for a total of 80 hours. For example, 9-hour shifts Monday through Thursday, and one 8-hour shift every other Friday.*

Remote Work

Allowing remote work options provides employees with extra time in their day to care for loved ones rather than spending that time commuting. For some, this can give hours back to your employee to help care for their loved ones.

Sample language:

This remote work policy establishes guidelines for employees who can work from a location other than our office. Remote work can improve productivity, reduce office and parking space needs, reduce traffic congestion, enhance work/life balance, protect the health and safety of employees. We want to ensure that both employees and our Company will benefit from these arrangements. All remote work must receive prior approval from [your supervisor, Human Resources, etc.]. Not all positions are appropriate or feasible for remote work. Team members and managers should determine long-term and short-term goals. They should frequently meet (either online or in-person when possible) to discuss progress and results.

To ensure that employee performance will not suffer in remote work arrangements, we advise our remote employees to:

- *Choose a quiet and distraction-free working space*
- *Have an internet connection that's adequate for their job*
- *Dedicate their full attention to their job duties during working hours*
- *Adhere to all meal and rest break and attendance schedules agreed upon with their manager and in compliance with state law*
- *Ensure their schedules overlap with those of their team members for as long as is necessary to complete their job duties effectively*

Additional Resources can be found at www.mhfcaustin.org/resources-for-workplaces/

PROGRAMS

Get to Know Your Caregiving Employees

Send out a short survey to your employees asking questions about their caregiving duties and what programs would best help them balance work and caregiving. Routinely sending out the survey is a good way to ensure programs are meeting the needs of your employees.



A sample survey can be found at www.mhfcaustin.org/resources-for-workplaces/

Create an Internal Portal for Caregivers

Create a list of applicable resources to caregivers of adults and have it easily accessible on your organization's collaborative platform, whether it be SharePoint, Google Drive, and Intranet Connection, etc. Consider breaking the resources out to be disease specific (eg. dementia, chronic disease, chronic pain), and including resources that are free/ low cost. High cost resources should also be included with possible discounts provided by the employer. The list of resources should include any or all of the following:

- Financial planning
- Elder Law Assistance
- Directory of Home Care Agencies
- Community Based Services (ie. Adult day cares, apps for transportation services, etc)
- Digital Tools (See appendix A)

Resources listed should include both ones offered by the employer through an EAP program/ benefits plan and ones offered by outside agencies.



Find a list of example resources in Central TX at mhfcaustin.com.

Create A Caregiver Forum for Working Caregivers

Provide time and space for employees to meet, receive support from others, and share resources. Employers can even have the group led by a caregiver or mental health expert.

MEMO

To: All Employees of [insert organization name]
From: [Insert Program Lead]
Date: 6/7/2021
Subject: Caregiver Forum Starting June 2021

This memo is to notify all employees of the first ever caregiver support group meeting.

If you are caring for a loved one, the stress of balancing their needs with your daily activities may become overwhelming. Support groups bring together people facing similar issues to share experiences and advice. Just talking with other people who are in the same boat can be helpful! While not everyone wants or needs support beyond family and friends, it can be helpful to turn to those outside your immediate circle. A forum of similar individuals can help you cope better and feel less isolated.

Meeting Time: 2nd Tuesday of every month

Meeting Place: Microsoft Teams [Insert link to meeting room]

Topic: June's Topic will cover how to handle working from home while providing care for your loved one.

Facilitator: [Insert biography of individual facilitating the group. If they are a current employee of the company highlight their role and how they have managed the role of employee and caregiver.]

Offer In-House Stress-Reduction Programs

Offer in-house programs or discounts for activities such as yoga, massage, meditation, fitness classes and other self-care activities. By making one of these activities mandatory for all employees, caregivers do not have to make up work time to participate. For example, declare that meetings cannot be scheduled on Tuesdays at 9AM so that all employees can participate in a facilitated meditation. Creating an incentive program for participation is an additional way to encourage employees to take advantage of the stress-reduction programs offered by the employer. Additionally, an employer can offer subsidies or rebates for employees who already take advantage of stress-reduction programs outside of the workplace.

Example Incentive Program:

The Stress Reduction Reward Program offers free fitness and stress-reduction classes at different [employer name] locations to all employees throughout the year. Classes meet once per week for 45-60 minutes. Employees can register for classes each quarter.

During Q1 – Q3 eligible employees can earn up to 8 administrative leave hours for meeting class attendance requirements. Employees that are unable to consistently attend in-person classes can participate in online classes and earn leave for partaking on their own time.

Provide and Promote Availability of Digital Tools That Support Caregivers

There are many digital tools that can help employees manage their caregiving responsibilities so that they are able to spend less time looking for resources and scheduling appointments and activities. Some of the digital tools are free or low-cost while others can be quite expensive. An employer can offer subsidies or rebates to employees who decide to use one or more digital tools to help manage their daily tasks. See **the MHFC website** for a list of digital tools available to caregivers.