



Quick Guide:

Supporting working caregivers through expanded leave options

Use the following key points to begin discussions about ways to expand leave options that make sense for your organization.

A model to support working caregivers via leave options is characterized by the following employer practices.

1. **Make leave options widely available.** Currently most employers offer some employees leave options. Far fewer make them available to most or all of their workforces.
2. **Provide options for extended leave.** Offer opportunities above and beyond the 12 week threshold of the Family Medical Leave Act. This can enhance the capacity of employees to manage more complex or enduring concerns.
3. **Provide options for paid leave.** For most employees (not just low wage workers) the prospect of an income loss can make unpaid leave unusable.
4. **Foster a supportive environment.** This requires not only structuring leave policies, but also creating a culture in which workers do not feel that their use of leave will result in being sidelined. Upper level and front-line management can help define work environments so that leave options are both present and usable.

The 2015 Talent Management Study found that four in five companies provide messages from top leadership strongly or very strongly affirming the connection between work and family concerns (78%), but not all do. When asked the degree to which top leadership communicates that “organizations should care about employees as people, considering how work demands can intersect with family demands,” 16% of respondents said “weakly” and 6% said “not at all.”

The provision of leave options is a common model that employers follow, but the nature of leave policies and practices can vary from employer to employer. Increasing access to more expansive leave options and access to paid leave are critical elements in supporting employee caregivers.