



**The Whole Care Network (WCN)**

# Whitepaper

The Importance of Supporting  
Working Family Caregivers:  
Perspectives of Human Resource  
Leaders and Recommendations  
for Improved Support



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# The Importance of Supporting Working Family Caregivers: Perspectives of Human Resource Leaders and Recommendations for Improved Support

## White Paper

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## Abstract


This white paper encapsulates the findings from a discussion panel held on September 22nd, 2023, featuring insights from 10 Human Resource (HR) Leaders representing diverse organizations across the United States. The primary objective was to delve into their perceptions and experiences regarding the caregiver workforce within their organizations. Through a comprehensive exploration, the paper sheds light on the current realities of family caregiving, the perceived impacts on organizations, and valuable suggestions for best practices in employee benefits and policies. The ensuing chapters present the diverse opinions of HR leaders, offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in supporting family caregivers. The white paper concludes with synthesized recommendations derived from the panel discussion, research insights, and the collective professional experiences of the authors. This compilation will serve as a valuable resource for organizations that aim to enhance their support systems for employees managing caregiving responsibilities.

### I. Realities of Our Current Workforce

We were curious to learn if HR leaders understood the term “family caregiver.” Those of us functioning as thought leaders and entrepreneurs in the care economy subscribe to the definition set forth by AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving in 2020. By this definition, family caregivers are family members or friends who provide unpaid care and are not health professionals (1). Therefore, the first question about the realities of family caregivers in our current workforce we asked our focus group was, **“What do you think is meant by the term “family caregiver?”** We aimed to collect HR leaders' understanding of the term.

Our focus group of HR leaders didn't struggle with the term “family caregiver.” They recognized that a family caregiver cares for a spouse, partner, child, disabled adult, or aging parent. They called out that care could include multi-generational aspects. There was specific mention of caregiving, including physical, emotional, and financial responsibilities. The responses aligned with the definition leaders within the care economy utilized and helped us establish a shared language for future questions. In a follow-up question, **“Which demographic of your employees do you feel are impacted most by family caregiving?”** the group identified family caregivers as most often females, identifying them as between 30 and 40. They considered whether family caregiving impacted hourly or lower-income employees more, stating, “Taking time off impacts them more financially,” especially when they “often don't have the resources to hire additional help.”

We then wanted to explore their perception of how much their workforce juggles care responsibilities with their career. We asked the group, **“What percentage of your workforce do you feel would fit within the definition of a family caregiver?”** Most focus group participants estimated the percentage to be 75% to 80% of their workforce. This figure, however, is often presumed rather than accurately measured due to the absence of a direct quantification method. These estimations were made from data HR leaders gather from self-reporting employees, employee resource groups, and data on benefit utilization gathered by the organization. There was a recognition among the group that organizations are trying to gather data but recognize they may never be able to get a complete or accurate picture. They understood that self-identification requires psychological safety and comfort in asking for help.



Employees with caregiving responsibilities often fear how others, especially their leaders, will perceive them. HR leaders also recognize that these employees may not understand the support their organization has in place for them. There was discussion without consensus on whether tenure within the organization, leadership level, or an employee's age impacted appropriate benefits and self-identification utilization. Namely, employees with inflexible work arrangements often face difficulty stepping back from their professional roles to fulfill caregiving responsibilities.

The landscape of family caregivers within the workforce reveals a notable presence that often goes unmeasured and underestimated. Drawing from the insights of our HR experts, it sheds light on the challenges these caregivers face, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and emphasizes the crucial role of organizations to capture data and appropriately support this considerable demographic of their workforce. Yet, leaders feel challenged when they attempt to collect that data, recognizing there is an opportunity to support these employees better if they can. Concerns about self-reporting due to potential stigma further complicate the accurate measurement of this workforce segment, revealing an unspoken and unrecognized issue linked to societal perceptions. A consensus among HR leaders is that enhanced communication is imperative to identify the genuine services employees require. Traditional methods of data capture, particularly during benefit open enrollment, provide a snapshot but need more nuance to address the diverse needs of family caregivers.

## **The Role of ERGs**

Many HR leaders within our focus group brought up existing employee resource groups (ERGs) within their organizations. These groups focus on family caregiving and offer employees a space to share their care obstacles and learn from and with peers navigating similar challenges. While there is a recognized challenge in encouraging busy individuals to participate in ERGs, evidence suggests that these groups play a pivotal role in pinpointing specific services in demand by their members. ERGs provide a platform for caregivers to voice their needs, share experiences, and contribute to a more inclusive and supportive work environment. From an HR perspective, these groups are often tapped for valuable data to identify appropriate benefits and policies that could minimize the obstacles of juggling careers with care responsibilities.

## **The Diversity of Caregiving**

Family caregivers are a diverse and broad group of individuals representing a variety of ages, ethnicities, and identities (2). While HR leaders within our focus group painted an accurate picture of the “typical” family caregiver, as described in a 2020 report from AARP and The National Alliance for Caregiving, the diversity of family caregivers has expanded in the past few years. Recognizing these employee demographics' distinctive challenges is crucial for fostering a truly inclusive and supportive workplace. Understanding the multifaceted nature of caregiving responsibilities enables organizations to tailor their support systems to meet the specific needs of each demographic, thereby promoting employee well-being and organizational success. Here are just a few examples of how different populations feel the unique impacts of caregiving.

1. Racial Impacts: (3).

- a. African American and Black family caregivers are more often the sole caregivers for a care recipient, are co-residing with them, and provide the most care for elders with chronic conditions like heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Alzheimer's/dementia, and diabetes, making them more likely to provide care for chronic conditions over more extended periods. In addition, this demographic is more likely to earn less income and work more hours than other demographics.
- b. American Indian and Alaska Native family caregivers experience higher financial strain than other ethnic groups when caring for their elders due to unique difficulties faced navigating financial situations when attempting to pay for elder care expenses.
- c. Hispanic family caregivers experience the highest difficulty coordinating and arranging care services for their elderly loved ones, with many health professionals and supports not positioned well to effectively translate care needs into their native language or cultural contexts.
- d. Asian American and Pacific Islander caregivers often feel they have no choice in taking on the care of their loved ones. Both familism and dutiful piety as cultural norms impact their caregiving experiences.

2. Age Impacts:

- a. The "Sandwich Generation" faces significant challenges juggling the demands of raising young children while caring for aging parents. These competing demands often result in complex caregiving scenarios. This sub-group has approximately eleven million caregivers (28 percent of all caregivers). They report dedicating, on average, 22 hours per week to caring for their loved ones. Sandwich caregivers often miss work or cut down work hours during their prime working and long-term saving years. One in five sandwich caregivers report feeling financial strain, and roughly a third report high emotional stress (4).
- b. Employees later in their careers encounter specific struggles, grappling with the complexities of family caregiving. Limited access to family support and the potential absence of a robust support system makes navigating the caregiving landscape more challenging for this demographic.

3. Social Impacts:

- a. LGBTQ+ family caregivers are more likely to experience negative impacts on their physical and emotional health when caregiving and experience more difficulty in managing care coordination across multiple care providers compared to non-LGBTQ+ caregivers.
- b. Individuals with lower income, predominantly hourly workers, bear a disproportionate burden of family caregiving responsibilities. The financial strain caused by unpaid leaves or reduced working hours directly impacts their income. Additionally, this demographic often needs more financial resources to access professional caregivers or support services.
- c. First-generation immigrants face unique hurdles while caregiving. Language barriers, unfamiliarity with available resources, and potential cultural differences in caregiving expectations contribute to this group's challenges.

### Recommendations for a Supportive and Inclusive Work Environment:

1. *Increase Accurate Measurement with Enhanced Communication Strategies:* Implement targeted communication strategies to encourage self-reporting by acknowledging the diverse nature of caregiving responsibilities and destigmatizing the need for support in managing work responsibilities. Enhanced communication could increase the percentage of working family caregivers who self-identify through organic sharing, increased utilization of benefits, policies, and support services, and increased engagement in applicable ERGs.
2. *Education and Awareness:* Conduct awareness programs to dispel societal stigmas associated with caregiving and emphasize the importance of supporting family caregivers in the workplace for employees and leaders. For example, conduct educational webinars or an employee caregiving panel.
3. *Promotion of ERGs:* Recognize and promote the value of ERGs as crucial avenues for identifying and addressing the unique needs of family caregivers within the workforce. If your organization does not have an ERG, create one.
4. *Flexible Work Arrangements:* Encourage and implement flexible work arrangements, even for hourly employees, to accommodate caregiving responsibilities, fostering a balance between professional and personal commitments.
5. *Tailored Support Programs:* Develop and implement support programs that specifically address the challenges faced by different demographics of employees to support employees across all their intersectionalities better. Target the diversity seen in the "sandwich generation," hourly workers, individuals later in their careers, and first-generation immigrants.
6. *Financial Assistance Initiatives:* Introduce financial assistance initiatives to mitigate the income impact of caregiving responsibilities. Financial assistance initiatives will positively impact all workers while offering significant benefits for hourly workers and ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their ability to fulfill caregiving duties.

By adopting these recommendations, organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that acknowledges and addresses the needs of family caregivers within the workforce, contributing to overall employee well-being and organizational success. Implemented recommendations will accommodate diverse caregiving responsibilities and enhance employee satisfaction, loyalty, and overall organizational resilience.

## II. Current Realities of Family Caregiving

With our focus group, we explored their perceptions of the tasks that family caregivers perform in their caring role and whether these perceptions align with the everyday care tasks of family caregivers as described in the literature (5;6). Our question to the panel was, “**What type of tasks do you think your employees with care responsibilities need to complete as part of their care role?**” The responses of the HR leaders revealed the intricate and multifaceted nature of caregiving responsibilities. They recognized that care encompasses diverse tasks and faces challenges beyond direct care. They also identified that “tasks are not always consistent or timely. Sometimes there’s a crisis, and that takes a whole other level of planning and support.” as stated by Heidi Gerth, Head of Human Capital North America and Global Talent Acquisition, Agrofresh.

Listed in order of prevalence, HR leaders identified these Multifaceted Caregiving Responsibilities:

1. Transportation Duties: Caregivers often find themselves responsible for transportation-related tasks, including accompanying family members to doctors' and personal care appointments (hair, nails, etc).
2. Direct Care Tasks: Caregivers are frequently engaged in tasks related to feeding, ensuring proper hygiene, medication management, and providing essential care for their family members.
3. Care Planning and Coordination: Caregivers play a pivotal role in care planning and coordination, collaborating with healthcare professionals to guarantee the best care for their family members. Planning and coordination involve liaising with medical practitioners and navigating complex healthcare systems.
4. Administrative Responsibilities: Beyond direct care, caregivers often handle administrative tasks such as managing paperwork for benefit applications and financial aid, organizing and co-creating essential financial and legal documents, and other related tasks. These tasks can be intricate and time-consuming, adding a layer of responsibility.
5. Research and Access to Support Services: Caregivers may need to conduct extensive research to identify and access various support services their family members may require, such as adult day programs, social engagement activities, meal delivery, etc. Navigating available resources demands time and effort on top of their caregiving responsibilities.
6. Companionship and Emotional Support: Providing companionship and emotional support is a common task for caregivers, especially for care recipients who cannot be left unattended.
7. Supervisory Roles for Unattended Family Members: Caregivers often assume responsibilities for family members who require supervision. This management role includes caring for individuals who may be unattended or need additional assistance.
8. Basic Household Tasks: Caregivers often manage basic household tasks such as housekeeping, meal preparation, lawn management, and pet care.

## Recommendations for Workplace Flexibility: A Vital Necessity

As previously identified, the percentage of our nation's current workforce impacted by caregiving is substantial. It is also true that the majority of those juggling care and career (61 percent) have experienced at least one work-related impact. These impacts result in needing to go to work late, leaving work early, or taking time off to accommodate for care. Some working family caregivers, estimations between 10 percent to one-third, have had to give up work entirely or retire early. Working family caregivers lose, on average, one and a half days per week due to their caregiving role (7). When this happens, caregivers face negative financial impacts (1;8).

It is crucial to recognize that caregiving responsibilities are inconsistent and unpredictable. Caregivers frequently encounter care needs that demand a different level of planning and support. This variability necessitates flexibility and accommodation from employers to ensure that caregiving employees can effectively balance their work responsibilities while fulfilling their vital caregiving roles. By recognizing the intricate landscape of caregiving responsibilities and prioritizing flexibility, employers can create a supportive work environment that acknowledges the diverse needs of caregiving employees and contributes to enhanced well-being and productivity.

1. *Flexible Work Arrangements*: Implement flexible work arrangements that allow caregivers to adapt their schedules to accommodate unpredictable caregiving responsibilities.
2. *Telecommuting Opportunities*: Provide telecommuting opportunities to enable caregivers to fulfill their work duties while attending to their caregiving responsibilities.
3. *Comprehensive Leave Policies*: Develop comprehensive leave policies, including paid leaves, that acknowledge the diverse nature of caregiving responsibilities, including emergency leave options for unforeseen crises.
4. *Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)*: Offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that provide resources and support for caregivers navigating the complexities of caregiving, practically and emotionally. Some resources may include talk therapy, legal and financial advice, and offering a curated list of adult community and housing options.
5. *Communication and Feedback Channels*: Establish open communication channels, like ERG, to allow caregivers to express their needs, provide feedback on support systems, and collaborate with employers to find practical solutions.

Subsequently, we wanted to learn HR leaders' perceptions of the mental and physical impacts on the family caregivers in their workforce. Repeating literature sheds light on family caregivers' specific feelings due to their care role's increased physical, mental, and social strain (9;10;11;12;13;14). Thus, our question was, **"How do you think the juggle between career and care impacts an employee's mental and physical health?"** Our focus group participants discussed the profound impact of juggling career and care responsibilities on employees' mental and physical health. The responses highlight a range of challenges, including decreased well-being, prioritization of others over self, depression, fatigue, burnout, overwhelm, anxiety, guilt, poor lifestyle choices, and physical health manifestations. The



significance of recognizing these challenges, prioritizing employee well-being, and offering accessible preventative health screening and social support is emphasized as crucial for both individual and organizational health.

Listed in order of prevalence are the identified impacts on mental and physical health:

1. *Decrease in Well-being*: The predominant response from HR leaders is the observed decrease in employee well-being. The strain of balancing career and caregiving responsibilities takes a toll on mental health, contributing to a sense of overwhelm and fatigue.
2. *Deprioritizing Self*: Employees often deprioritize their well-being while managing their career and care responsibilities. This self-neglect contributes to heightened stress levels and diminished mental health.
3. *Depression and Anxiety*: The juggling between career and care responsibilities is linked to increased rates of depression and anxiety among employees. The constant pressure and demands contribute to mental health challenges.
4. *Fatigue, Burnout, and Overwhelm*: Burnout and overwhelming feelings are frequent outcomes of the perpetual balancing act. Employees find themselves stretched thin, leading to exhaustion and feeling overwhelmed. Household breadwinners, in particular, experience heightened pressure, anxiety, and depression due to the dual responsibility of being a financial provider while managing caregiving duties.
5. *Guilt for Not Doing Enough*: Employees often experience guilt for not meeting perceived expectations in their professional and caregiving roles. This emotional burden contributes to mental health challenges.
6. *Poor Lifestyle Choices*: The stress of managing career and care responsibilities can lead to poor lifestyle choices, including unhealthy eating habits and a lack of exercise. These choices contribute to overall physical health deterioration.
7. *Substance Abuse*: Some employees resort to substance abuse as a coping mechanism, further exacerbating the negative impact on physical health.

### Recommendations for Organizational Well-being

1. Prioritize Employee Well-being: HR leaders underscore the need for organizations to prioritize employee well-being. Neglecting employee mental and physical health can lead to hidden costs for the organization, including decreased productivity and increased healthcare expenses. “Employee well-being needs to be a priority. We’re not paying attention to this,” stated Monica Sturgis, Chief Human Resources Officer for the Port of Virginia.
2. Preventative Health Screening: Organizations can offer easily accessible preventative health screening as a proactive measure to identify and address health issues before they escalate.
3. Social Support: A key recommendation is creating a supportive community within the organization, such as creating an employee resource group for family caregivers. Social support is vital for helping employees navigate the challenges of balancing career and care responsibilities.

### III. Impacts on an Organization

Here, we wanted to learn from our HR Leaders if they perceived any negative impacts on productivity within their companies when working family caregivers don’t receive support. Our question was, “**What do you think are the greatest risks to your company if family caregiver-employees aren’t supported meaningfully through employee policies and benefits?**”. The resulting discussion covered a spectrum of challenges, ranging from attrition and disengagement to broader organizational impacts. It also underscored the positive transformative potential when robust support systems are in place.

We recognize that the biggest challenge in determining what caregiving costs their business is that much of the impact is considered “hidden.” There is no actual direct cost associated with a specific event. However, most organizations understand that turnover, burnout, absenteeism, and tardiness impact the bottom line. AARP estimates that eldercare already costs U.S. employers “\$6.6 billion to replace employees (9% left work to either take early retirement or quit) and nearly \$6.3 billion in workday interruptions (i.e., coming in late, leaving early, taking time off during the day, or spending work time on eldercare matters) (15). With three out of four employees (73%) reporting having some type of caregiving responsibility, you must consider that most of your workforce is dealing with some caregiving role that can and will lead to an event.

Both sides, the employer and the employee, acknowledge that “caregiving responsibilities frequently result in presenteeism behaviors that adversely affected employee career progression within their organizations. This “distraction factor” is especially true in “high achievers”—employees between the ages of 25–35 years, with senior executive titles and who manage leaders (15). Reports demonstrate that family caregivers have higher turnover rates, resulting in more recruiting and training expenses, estimated at \$47 billion for our nation’s employers (16). A new wrinkle to this issue is the cost of

healthcare to an employer due to caregiving. Reports indicate caregivers cost their employers an estimated 8% more (\$13.4 billion a year) in health costs than non-caregivers (16).

When looking at estimated costs, using a conservative hourly pay of \$25, the average productivity loss due to presenteeism was 11%, and the average annualized at-work productivity cost per working caregiver was \$5,281. Working caregivers also missed an average of 3.2 workdays in the prior month, for an estimated average productivity loss of 2.2%. The average annualized cost for absenteeism was \$1,123 per working caregiver (17)

### Key Risks Identified by Focus Group

1. Attrition and Talent Drain: The foremost risk HR experts highlight is the potential departure of family caregiver employees from the organization. This could lead to increased turnover rates and negative impacts on institutional knowledge and workforce continuity.
2. Disengagement and Reduced Productivity: Disengagement at work emerged as a critical risk. Family caregivers may struggle to balance professional responsibilities without proper support, resulting in diminished productivity and effectiveness in their roles.
3. Retraining Costs: Beyond losing skilled employees, the associated retraining costs become a financial burden for the organization.
4. Impact on Patient/Customer Outcomes: A healthcare HR leader emphasized the direct impact on patient/customer outcomes, recognizing the interconnectedness of caregiver support with organizational performance in the healthcare sector.
5. Recruitment Challenges and Reputation Impact: In the current hiring landscape, where potential employees pay close attention to employee benefits and policies, a lack of support for family caregivers can tarnish the organization's reputation and hinder recruitment efforts. The external perception of an unsupportive workplace may deter potential talent from joining.

### Positive Transformative Potential

Amidst the challenges discussed, one business leader emphasized the transformative potential of supporting family caregivers. When employers provide meaningful support, family caregivers emerge as the organization's most productive, organized, accountable, and responsible employees. "Active family caregivers are some of the most productive and organized employees organizations have," stated Darra Wray, Senior Manager, Future Product Marketing with HP Inc. Recognizing the symbiotic relationship between employee well-being and organizational success, this perspective highlights the positive impact that strategic support systems can have on the workforce.

## IV. Employee Benefits and Policies Best Practices

We were curious what employee benefits and policies HR Leaders would identify, from within their current menu, as being most helpful to family caregivers in their workforce. We asked, **“What policies and employee benefits can you identify, already available within your companies, that could be leveraged to support family caregivers in your workforce?”**. The insights provided by HR leaders underscore the significance of remote work policies, flexible scheduling, and a range of employee benefits to support family caregivers effectively. This comprehensive overview delves into existing policies, challenges in their utilization, and strategic recommendations for optimizing support.

### Current Landscape: Policies and Benefits Leveraged for Support

Listed in order of prevalence, HR leaders identified most remote work policies, employee resource groups, family leave policies, and specific caregiving services as supports within their current benefits and policy landscape. Additionally, HR leaders mentioned health advocacy, subsidized backup care services, emotional well-being services, flexible scheduling, options for transition to part-time status, job sharing policies, vacation policies, legal advice, and veteran support. Specifically called out was the acknowledgment that organizations must regularly conduct benefit and policy audits to ensure adequate support is in place.

“We did an equity audit to see if we were supporting caregivers,” stated Monica Sturgis, Chief Human Resources Officer. If companies did audits regularly, it could help them refine the supports they have in place to support working family caregivers. Christy Yaccarino, Director of Total Rewards & Benefits at Seagen, shared how the company had expanded family leave policies by privatizing leave benefits from the most generous state where they do business so that all employees can now enjoy the expansive policy regardless of which state they work from. Audits have also led other organizations to redefine company policies, such as expanding leave policies to include ten caregiving days or opening vacation policies up to unlimited vacation days.

### Challenges and Strategies for Optimization

Despite the availability of these supportive policies, employee utilization is a challenge. HR leaders emphasized the critical role of education for organizational leaders to identify caregivers, guide them, communicate available benefits, and gather feedback on effectiveness. The HR leaders underscored the importance of open communication and normalization of caregiving experiences. Town meetings where senior leaders shared their own family caregiving experiences proved effective in creating an open dialogue. However, challenges in ERG coordination were identified, particularly in larger organizations with decentralized support structures.

### Limitation of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

A critical observation was made regarding the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), highlighting its limitation in providing compensation when an employee needs time off to care for a loved one. A lack of paid time off only exacerbates the financial burden experienced during caregiving. HR leaders from our

focus group agreed that they would instead explore other company leave policies that provide compensation or help employees tap into additional benefits such as assistance with mileage, car gasoline, or subsidized care.

## Education and Support of Leaders

Thankfully, our focus group participants identified that the education of leaders was critical to help them identify family caregivers and guide them to the proper support. We had already planned to dive into this issue deeper with the question, “**How does your organization support your leaders so they can recognize family caregivers, provide a supportive environment, and guide them to adequate benefits?**”. The participants’ insights reveal diverse approaches, including training sessions with caregiving experts, normalization through senior leader dialogues, utilization of HR tools for benefits navigation, a focus on mental health initiatives, and the critical role of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Despite these efforts, a consensus emerged on the need for improved manager training, enhanced communication, and increased awareness to identify family caregivers effectively. As Cristal Feliciano, Vice President of Benefits & HRIS at 1-800-flowers, stated, “The training is lacking for managers. A lot of the work that we’ve done has been in the mental health space. We haven’t necessarily trained or guided our leaders to recognize family caregivers but rather, how to recognize employees who need support with their mental health.”

## Strategies for Education and Support of Leaders

1. Caregiving Expert Training: Some organizations have brought in caregiving experts to conduct training sessions for leaders. This approach aims to enhance leaders' ability to recognize family caregivers, understand their unique challenges, and provide support.
2. Normalization through Senior Leaders: Senior leaders within specific organizations have played a crucial role in normalizing the dialogue around caregiving. By sharing their own care stories, these leaders create a supportive environment and reduce the stigma associated with caregiving responsibilities.
3. HR Tools for Benefits Navigation: Several organizations leverage practical HR tools to assist employees during open enrollment. These tools guide employees, including family caregivers, to navigate benefits effectively, ensuring they access the necessary resources and support. When leaders within organizations can navigate these tools fluently, they can better guide their staff to appropriate support.
4. Mental Health Initiatives: Recognizing the profound impact of caregiving on mental health, some organizations have focused on mental health initiatives. As Cristal Feliciano, Vice President of Benefits & HRIS at 1-800-flowers, stated, “A lot of work we’ve done has been around mental health. We have a lot of work to do here.” By folding family caregiver support into evolving mental health initiatives, these organizations aim to provide holistic support to family caregivers.
5. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): ERGs provide crucial help and support. Organizations rely on ERGs to create a community where family caregivers can share experiences, access resources, and contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

### Recommendations for Education and Support of Leaders

1. Comprehensive Manager Training Programs: Develop and implement comprehensive training programs for managers to enhance their ability to recognize family caregivers, fostering a more supportive workplace culture.
2. Enhanced Communication Strategies: Implement targeted communication strategies to raise awareness about caregiving responsibilities, ensuring that managers are well-informed and equipped to identify and support family caregivers. In Canada, between September 2021 and April 2022, social media and an informational website were shown to be effective strategies for communication within a workplace (18).
3. Collaboration with ERGs: Collaborate closely with ERGs to leverage their insights and resources. ERGs can play a vital role in bridging communication gaps and fostering community among family caregivers.
4. Continuous Feedback Mechanism: Establish a constant feedback mechanism to assess the effectiveness of existing initiatives and identify areas for improvement. Encourage open dialogue between HR leaders, managers, and caregiving employees to refine support systems.

By implementing these recommendations, organizations can enhance their leaders' ability to recognize family caregivers, create a supportive environment, and guide them to the necessary benefits. This holistic approach benefits caregivers and contributes to a workplace culture that prioritizes employee well-being and inclusivity.

## V. Summary of Recommendations

### Recommendations for a Supportive and Inclusive Work Environment:

1. *Increase Accurate Measurement with Enhanced Communication Strategies*: Implement targeted communication strategies to encourage self-reporting by acknowledging the diverse nature of caregiving responsibilities and destigmatizing the need for support in managing work responsibilities. Enhanced communication strategies could increase the percentage of working family caregivers who self-identify through organic sharing, increased utilization of benefits, policies, and support services, and increased engagement in applicable ERGs.
2. *Education and Awareness*: Conduct awareness programs to dispel societal stigmas associated with caregiving and emphasize the importance of supporting family caregivers in the workplace for employees and leaders.
3. *Promotion of ERGs*: Create and promote the value of ERGs as crucial avenues for identifying and addressing the unique needs of family caregivers within the workforce.
4. *Flexible Work Arrangements*: Encourage and implement flexible work arrangements, even for hourly employees, to accommodate caregiving responsibilities, fostering a balance between professional and personal commitments.
5. *Tailored Support Programs*: Develop and implement support programs that specifically address the challenges faced by different demographics of employees to support employees across all their intersectionalities better. Target the diversity seen in the "sandwich generation," hourly workers, individuals later in their careers, and first-generation immigrants.
6. *Financial Assistance Initiatives*: Introduce financial assistance initiatives to mitigate the income impact of caregiving responsibilities. These initiatives will positively impact all workers while offering significant benefits for hourly workers and ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their ability to fulfill caregiving duties.

### Recommendations for Workplace Flexibility: A Vital Necessity

1. *Flexible Work Arrangements*: Implement flexible work arrangements that allow caregivers to adapt their schedules to accommodate unpredictable caregiving responsibilities.
2. *Telecommuting Opportunities*: Provide telecommuting opportunities to enable caregivers to fulfill their work duties while attending to their caregiving responsibilities.
3. *Comprehensive Leave Policies*: Develop comprehensive leave policies that acknowledge the diverse nature of caregiving responsibilities, including emergency leave options for unforeseen crises.
4. *Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)*: Offer Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) that provide resources and support for caregivers navigating the complexities of caregiving, practically and emotionally.
5. *Communication and Feedback Channels*: Establish open communication channels for caregivers to express their needs, provide feedback on support systems, and collaborate with employers to find practical solutions.

## Recommendations for Organizational Well-being

1. *Prioritize Employee Well-being*: HR leaders underscore the need for organizations to prioritize employee well-being. Neglecting employee mental and physical health can lead to hidden costs for the organization, including decreased productivity and increased healthcare expenses. “Employee well-being needs to be a priority. We’re not paying attention to this,” stated Christine Pietrowicz-Joanis SHRM-SC, Area Sales Manager for PuzzleHR.
2. *Preventative Health Screening*: Organizations can offer easily accessible preventative health screening as a proactive measure to identify and address health issues before they escalate.
3. *Social Support*: A key recommendation is creating a supportive community within the organization. Social support is vital for helping employees navigate the challenges of balancing career and care responsibilities.

## Recommendations for Education and Support of Leaders

1. *Comprehensive Manager Training Programs*: Develop and implement comprehensive training programs for managers to enhance their ability to recognize family caregivers, fostering a more supportive workplace culture. As stated by Darra Wray, Senior Manager, Future Product Marketing and Member of the DisAbility Business Group at HP Inc., “There are great tools for our leaders to guide employees to benefits for caregivers. But, the tools are more prolific than the training and knowledge on how to navigate and use them is right now.”
2. *Enhanced Communication Strategies*: Implement targeted communication strategies to raise awareness about caregiving responsibilities, ensuring that managers are well-informed and equipped to identify and support family caregivers. In Canada, between September 2021 and April 2022, social media and an informational website were shown to be effective strategies for communication within a workplace (18).
3. *Collaboration with ERGs*: Collaborate closely with ERGs to leverage their insights and resources. ERGs can play a vital role in bridging communication gaps and fostering community among family caregivers.
4. *Continuous Feedback Mechanism*: Establish a constant feedback mechanism to assess the effectiveness of existing initiatives and identify areas for improvement. Encourage open dialogue between HR leaders, managers, and caregiving employees to refine support systems.



## CONCLUSION

As we conclude this white paper, the overarching hope is that it catalyzes a global shift in employer consciousness. The discussions with HR leaders have illuminated the multifaceted challenges caregivers face in the workforce. It is our aspiration that this document serves as a clarion call to employers, urging them to recognize that employees carry life's complexities beyond the workplace.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the intricate tapestry of caregiving responsibilities, but a heightened sensitivity is required. Employers must acknowledge that options are available, necessitating a case-by-case approach. It is crucial to be aware that caregiving stands alongside other prominent life challenges.

While this white paper may not provide specific solutions for every job description, its primary purpose is cultivating awareness. Caregiving is not a separate entity; it sits on the shelf alongside other factors influencing employee well-being and job performance. Recognizing this reality is the first step in breaking the hardness of a strictly business-oriented mindset.

Our collective aim should be to soften the corporate shell, acknowledging that businesses are not solely robotic entities but vibrant ecosystems comprising lives with intricate moving parts. Employees are more than mere resources; they are the heartbeats that define a business. When employers adopt this mindset, a profound transformation occurs.

This shift encourages a more compassionate approach, making caregivers feel heard and valued. It opens avenues for dialogue, recognizing that each individual's circumstances are unique. The goal is not to have all the answers but to initiate conversations that lead to mutually beneficial solutions.

As we move forward, let this white paper reinforce that organizations thrive when they embrace the humanity of their workforce. By understanding and addressing the challenges caregivers face, we pave the way for a workplace that is productive but also compassionate, flexible, and resilient. We sincerely hope this paper sparks conversations, fosters empathy, and contributes to a future where employees can bring their whole selves to work, knowing they are supported and valued.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors extend their heartfelt gratitude to the Human Resource and business leaders whose invaluable insights and generous contributions played a pivotal role in shaping this white paper. Their dedication to sharing their time, experiences, and opinions has enriched the document, offering a comprehensive understanding of the realities and challenges surrounding the caregiver workforce. We sincerely appreciate their willingness to contribute to this endeavor, and their valuable perspectives have significantly enhanced the depth and breadth of the discussions presented in this white paper.

Cristal Feliciano, Vice President of Benefits & HRIS for 1800flowers

Mario Gagliano, Vice President of Human Resources for Zoetis

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Danielle Riecke, Senior Human Resources Business Partner for Aaron's

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Darra Wray, Senior Manager, Future Product Marketing, HP Inc.

Christy Yaccarino, Director of Total Rewards & Benefits for Seagen

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# APPENDIX

As a reference to illustrate the cost associated, we present the following table:

**Estimated Costs of Employee Caregivers in a company using data provided**

- 73% of employees reported having some type of caregiving responsibility that can and will lead to an event: Section III. Impacts on Organizations
- 10-33% of employee caregivers are estimated to retire early or quit: Recommendations for Workplace Flexibility: A Vital Necessity
- \$5,281 average annual at-work productivity cost per caregiver: Section III. Impacts on Organizations
- \$1,123 average annualized cost for absenteeism per caregiver: Section III. Impacts on Organizations
- 8% additional estimated annual health care costs per caregiver: Section III. Impacts on Organizations

**Example of Estimated Costs of Employee Caregivers for a Company with 1,000 employees**

Number Employees	Percentage of Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities	Number of Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities	Percentage of Caregiver Employees who quit the labor force	Number of Caregiver Employees who quit the labor force
1000	73%	730	10 - 30%	73 - 240

**Estimated Total Cost Overtime to Replace an Employee**

(Industry attributes this to be on average 2x annual salary)

Example Annual Salary	With 73 Employees leaving the labor force	With 240 Employees leaving the labor force
\$60,000	<b>\$8,760,000</b> (2 * 60,000 * 73)	<b>\$28,800,000</b> (2 * 60,000 * 240)

Estimated Annual At-Work Productivity Cost (\$5,281 Section III. Impacts on Organizations)	Estimated Annual At-Work Absenteeism Cost (\$1,123 Section III. Impacts on Organizations)
With 730 Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities	With 730 Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities
<b>\$3,855,130</b> (\$5,281 * 730)	<b>\$819,790</b> (\$1,123 * 730)