WORK AND FAMILY POLICIES:

OPTIONS FOR THE 90s AND BEYOND . . . .

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THE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S FOUNDATION
provides information, education and research programs designed to help improve the economic status of working women.

Established in 1956 by the members of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women, Inc. (BPW/USA), the BPW Foundation is a nonprofit public grantmaking organization governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees comprised of BPW leaders and public representatives.

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Tanya, a single parent, was looking for a new job — one with more flexibility so that she could work and still have time to raise her children. She was doing some research on interviewing techniques and noticed that several of the books contained advice on answering questions about child care arrangements. Since work and family conflicts were the main reason she was looking for another position, she avidly read the advice. To her dismay and bemusement, however, the recommendations ranged from denying any problems in balancing work and family needs to saying that if a conflict arose, you had arrangements with a neighbor, who would pick up the children from day care, cook them dinner and entertain them until your work responsibilities were completed. Where, Tanya wondered, did this neighbor live — she wanted to move in next door.

Bill and Mary are both thirtysomething professionals. They recently had their first child and, after Mary's maternity leave ended, found a family day-care situation for Alice, their daughter. Their child care arrangements have worked out well, except for last month, when Alice got sick. Mary took some time off but, due to her already compressed work schedule, felt that she couldn't afford to miss any more time. Since Alice was not well enough to return to day care, Bill asked his boss if he could take a sick day to care for his child. The boss jokingly asked him, "Why do you have to? That's what wives are for."

Reconciling the conflicts of work responsibilities and dependent care needs is a central work force and economic issue. One of the most important concerns facing employers today is the development and implementation of "family-friendly" workplace policies. Today, work and family conflicts, and their deleterious effect on job performance, are well recognized in the business community. Not too long ago, however, a report released by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on private-sector initiatives to improve the quality of working life contained no mention of work and family issues. Instead, the report focused on a variety of topics including industrial democracy, participative management, organizational development and work redesign. Work and family issues did not even enter the discussion — much less receive serious attention. Social and demographic changes, however, have brought work and family issues to the forefront.

The need for dependent care has always existed. Low-income, single and minority women — for whom paying jobs have long been essential — have regularly had to find some way to care for their children and elderly dependents while they were at work. The soaring labor force participation of all women over the past four decades, along with the aging of America, has only intensified the problem of meeting both work and dependent care needs. The search for workable solutions, though, has fortunately also increased, as a result of economic and demographic shifts.

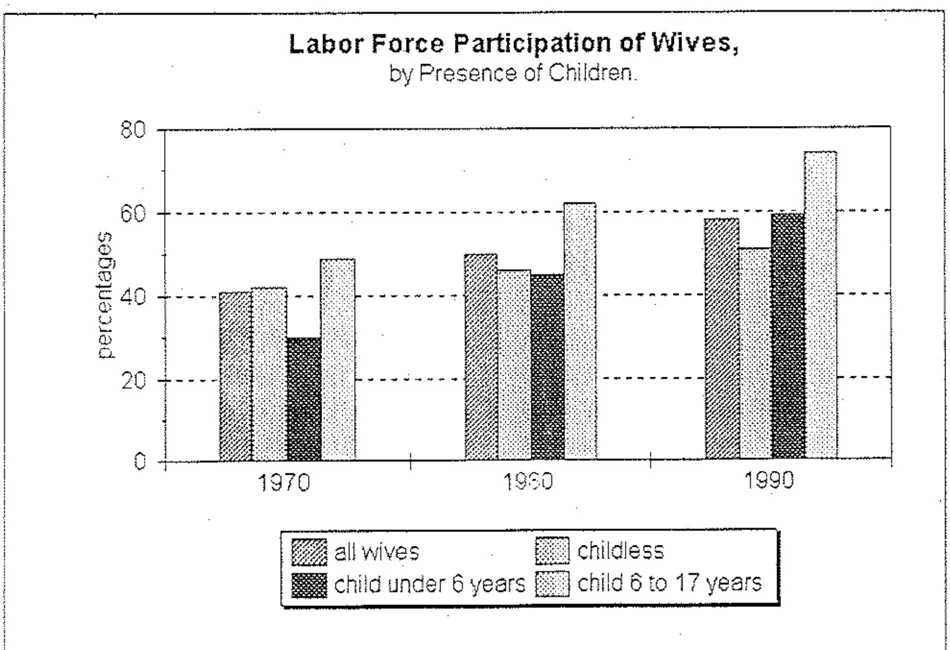
Changing Demographics

Over the last three decades, the number of families in which both spouses worked has almost doubled. In 1960, the husband and wife both worked in 28 percent of married-couple families; by 1990, the proportion was 65 percent. Over the same period, the proportion of traditional families in which the husband, but not the wife, was in the labor force shrank from 61 percent of all married couples to just 10 percent.

Furthermore, only one in four of the nation's children lives in a "traditional" family with one parent at home and one parent at work.[1] Nationwide, two-thirds of children ages six to 17 have working parents, up from 36 percent in 1970.[2] Of the 24 percent of all children who live with just one parent, 69 percent have a working parent.

The surge in labor force participation is perhaps most dramatic for mothers with children under age six. Today, as never before, most of this group of women are employed outside the home. As recently as 1975, the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that labor force participation rates varied significantly among women depending on their marital status and whether or not they had children. By 1990, however, nearly 60 percent of all women with children under six were in the work force. For all women, employment rates range from about 75 percent for women with school age children, to 52 percent for women with children under two.

Although women's increasing presence in the work force has intensified the need for dependent care options, the problem can't be solved by a return to the "traditional" family, as some people



Source: Current Population Reports, P23-181, Bureau of the Census, November 1992 have suggested. Increasing numbers of families are supported by only one parent, who is usually female, and are dependent upon that parent's wages. Since 1970, the number of single-parent households has increased from 13 percent to 28 percent.[3] Furthermore, although a family's economic well-being used to depend almost exclusively on the husband's earnings, today the majority of families need two incomes to manage. Having two parents with incomes often means the difference between barely scraping by and being able to provide a secure financial environment for the family.

Although men are assuming more family responsibilities, women still bear the brunt of day-to-day duties. Today, the typical woman can expect to spend 17 years caring for children and 18 years caring for older family members. Nine out of 10 women will be caregivers either of children or parents or both.[4] The majority of these women will also be employed, and their employment decisions will be influenced and altered by the availability and affordability of dependent care options.

Child Care — The Current Situation

The demand for child care far outweighs the supply. Nationwide, there is a shortage of affordable, quality child care. 24 million children under 13 are in need of day care, while spaces exist in licensed centers for only six million children. Moreover, seven to 25 percent of the nation's schoolchildren are "latchkey" children because their parents cannot afford to place them in supervised care before or after school.

Affordable child care is an especially vexing concern for the working poor. The cost of full-time child care ranges from $2,500 to $10,000 annually depending on the geographic region and the type of care sought. Financial advisers recommend spending no more than 10 percent of family income on child care; however, low-income families spend an average of 25 percent of their income on child care. A minimum-wage worker would spend almost all of her or his income on child care costs.[5]

Because of the cost of child care, many single mothers are forced out of the job market and must rely on welfare payments. Fifty percent of young mothers not in the labor force because of the lack of affordable, available child care receive welfare payments.[6] Moreover, in many dual-parent families, the cost of child care often forces the mother out of the labor market. In married-couple families with incomes under $15,000, 36 percent of mothers who are not in the labor force would seek work if reasonably priced child care were available.

Child care options effect not only current employment decisions, but also future earnings potential. For low-income and minority families, particularly those headed by women, child care affordability and availability is often the deciding factor in whether the mother can continue her education, enter a job training program or get a job.[7]

Finding and paying for child care is not only a problem for low-income families, however. Although a higher income increases the available options, middleclass and high-income families must also deal with the shortage of quality, convenient child care alternatives.

The scarcity of available, quality child care is worsened by the employment situation of child care workers. Child care workers leave the profession at a high rate due to low wages, few or non-existent benefits and the low status of the profession. The average hourly pay for child care workers is $5.35 per hour, or $9,363 annually.[8] This salary is half of what comparably educated women earn and one-third of what comparably educated men earn.

Day care centers average about 40 percent turnover per year — only gas station attendants and dishwashers leave their fields more frequently.[9] The adequacy of the child care system depends in large measure, though, on the quality of employees. The dilemma is that increased wages and benefits for child care workers will inevitably increase the cost of care.

Elder Care — The Current Situation

In addition to arranging care for children, families and individuals must also care for elderly dependents. Moreover, contrary to a common perception, most elderly dependents are not placed in nursing homes. Approximately 90 percent of elderly dependents are cared for by their families. Two-thirds of the primary caregivers are working women.[10]

Elder care is much more difficult to arrange than child care. Elderly dependents vary significantly in the amount and type of care they need. Moreover, many elderly dependents don't live with their caretakers — sometimes they don't even live in the same town or state.

Availability and affordability of care are problems in the area of elder care, just as they are in the child care arena. Few adult day care centers exist and in-home care is usually prohibitively expensive. The network of services for elderly dependents is fragmented, and many people caring for elderly dependents are unaware of what few programs do exist.

The demands posed by elder care are likely to escalate. Today, more and more people are living longer — approximately one in nine Americans is 65 or over and, by 2020, the number may be one in six. By contrast, only one in 25 Americans in 1900 was 65 or over.[11] Moreover, the individuals who have traditionally provided care for the elderly are increasingly unavailable, since the majority of women today work outside the home.

Federal Dependent Care Programs

There are several federal programs designed to assist families with their dependent care needs through direct financial assistance and by increasing the quantity and quality of dependent care options. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 established the Child Care and Development Block Grant and new tax credits and increased funding for state programs. Legislation has also been enacted to ensure leave for families with new children or emergency dependent care responsibilities

Child Care and Development Block Grants

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) provides support to families through federal funding to states, Indian Tribes and Territories. It requires grantees to use 75 percent of grant monies for child care services and activities to improve the availability and quality of child care. The remaining 25 percent must be used, through grants and contracts, to establish, expand and conduct early childhood development before- and after-school care programs. To qualify, individuals must be working or attending job-training or educational programs, have a child under 13 and have a total family income of less than 75 percent of the state's median income for a family of the same size. States are also required to give priority to low-income families and to children with special needs.

At-Risk Child Care Program

This program is designed to provide child care assistance to low-income working families who are not on welfare but are at risk of becoming welfare recipients in the absence of financial assistance for child care. The program is administered by states and families must contribute to the cost of the care based on a sliding fee scale developed by the state. Additional eligibility requirements are established by each state.

Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

The Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit is available to all families who incur dependent care expenses while working, looking for work or attending school full-time, regardless of the gross income of the family. The credit is not refunded to individuals who do not earn enough to pay taxes, though.

Married couples are entitled to the credit if both spouses work full- and or part-time and they file a joint tax return. Divorced or separated parents with custody of a child, single working parents, single parents who are attending school and full-time students with working spouses are also eligible for the credit. To qualify, parents must have a child under age 13 or a disabled dependent living at home. The credit is for a portion of the expenses paid for care, adjusted according to income.

Earned Income and Related Tax Credits

The Earned Income Credit (EIC) is a cash refund, available to employees with earned incomes of less than $21,250 in 1991 dollars and dependents under age 19 (or 24 if they are in school full-time.) There is no age requirement for dependents who are permanently and totally disabled. New tax laws expanded the EIC to include a higher benefit level for families with two or more children and a credit for a child under age one.

The new tax laws also established a child health insurance tax credit. The credits are available even if one parent stays at home. Individuals can claim the credit for a child under age one or the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, but cannot claim both credits for the same child. Employees can, however, claim both the EIC and the child health insurance credit.

Family and Medical Leave

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), signed into law February 1993, provides employees with up to 12 weeks per year of unpaid leave for childbirth or adoption, to care for a child, parent or spouse with a serious health condition or for a serious personal illness. FMLA applies only to employers with 50 or more employees, though, and coverage is limited to workers employed for at least one year and those working a minimum of 25 hours per week.

Federal legislation and programs do provide necessary assistance to families with dependent care needs. They do not, however, address on-going problems caused by competing work and family responsibilities — and they perhaps should not seek to address these concerns. Ongoing work and family conflicts are often most effectively reduced when programs and policies are individually crafted and implemented to meet the needs of a particular work force in a specific workplace.

CHANGING YOUR WORKPLACE

Of the nation's six million employers, 5,600 provide some form of dependent care assistance or benefit to their employees, a 500 percent increase since 1978.[12] Employers are increasingly responding to demographic and economic shifts, and are becoming more responsive to instituting programs and policies which address the needs of an increasingly diverse work force.

What can you do if your employer is not one of the companies offering or considering family-friendly benefits? Transforming the workplace requires a two-pronged approach: making a strong case to management on the bottom-line benefits the company will gain from the implementation of family-friendly programs; and determining what programs and policies will best meet the needs of both employee and employer. A grass-roots approach — where employees persuade their employers to offer family-friendly benefits — is not uncommon and can be successful.

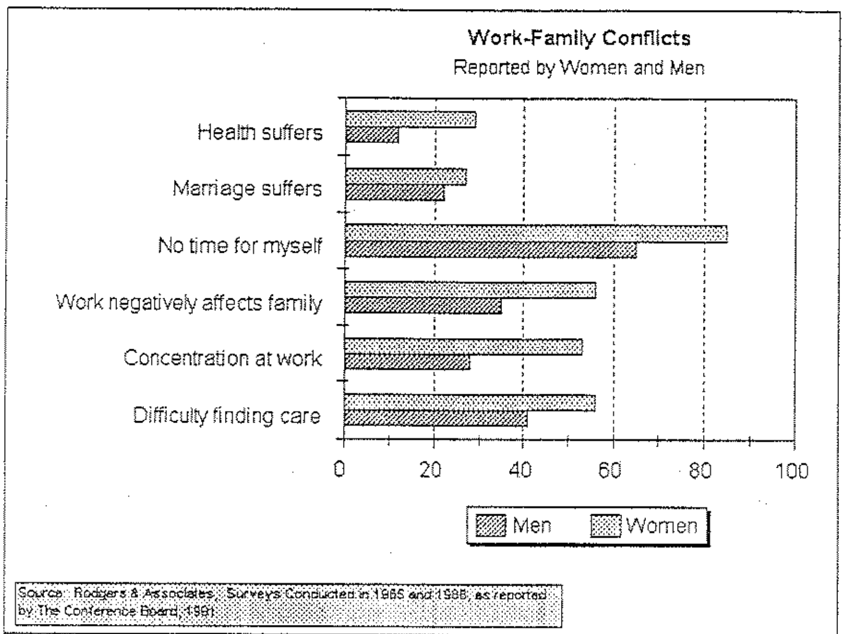
Making the Case

Employers are generally motivated to implement work and family benefit programs by the need to respond to company problems, such as lessened competitiveness and lowered employee productivity, resulting from conflicts between work and family responsibilities. Motivated employers — who recognize the connection between dependent care arrangements and job performance — may be held back from the implementation of more family-friendly policies by two primary concerns: cost and equity. These concerns must be adequately addressed before any transformation of the work environment can occur.

Cost/Benefit of Family-Friendly Policies

The cost of family-friendly benefit programs is a legitimate concern. It is equally important, however, to consider not only the cost of providing the benefit but also the cost of not providing the benefit. Company losses resulting from work and family conflicts should be factored into the equation of the cost of family-friendly benefit programs, along with the actual company investment in the program. Research indicates that the majority of dependent care benefit programs are short-term investments which result in long-term savings.

found that one in five employees had experienced health problems as a result of the strain from balancing work and family roles. Other studies have shown that workers who care for elderly relatives are twice as likely to lose or



Programs and policies designed to address problems resulting from work and family conflicts reduce employee turnover and absenteeism, improve a company's productivity as well as its labor-management relations, and enhance the employer's ability to attract and retain qualified employees. The lack of family-friendly policies, however, exacts a price on both employees and employers. Employees suffer from stress and increased health problems, and employers suffer from lower productivity and morale.

When the DuPont company surveyed their workers several years ago, they

gain weight and to get headaches. They are also three times as likely to report frequent anxiety or depression. Furthermore, many working parents suffer from distraction while on the job. This distraction is so prevalent that it has been named the "3 o'clock syndrome." The syndrome is defined as what happens in the workplace at 3 p.m. when latchkey children begin arriving home from school and employees begin worrying more about their children and less about their work. The 3 o'clock syndrome has been blamed for everything from less productivity by office workers to errors on assembly lines by factory workers.

Elder care obligations also adversely effect employees and employers. Extensive elder care responsibilities may cause employees to alter their employment schedules, or even to quit their jobs. A 1988 study by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the Opinion Research Center (ORC) found that 33 percent of employees reported coming in late or leaving early due to elder care responsibilities. A survey by the Families and Work Institute and Older Women's League found that 25 percent of respondents had to alter their employment situations as a result of their elder care responsibilities, while only 10 percent reported no significant problems in managing their responsibilities. Changes included switching jobs, becoming unemployed, becoming self-employed or taking on several part-time jobs.[13]

Forty percent of the work force is currently juggling work and family responsibilities, according to the American Management Association. As a result of the conflicts between family needs and work responsibilities, these individuals, for the most part, function poorly, resulting in a $3 billion annual loss in productivity.[14] An average employer with 1,000 employees loses about $500,000 a year in productivity simply due to elder care demands.[15] This figure represents money lost through absenteeism, time off during business hours, missed overtime, reductions in productivity because of added stress and fatigue and the expenses associated with unnecessary job turnover.[16]

According to the *Harvard Business Review*, "Dependent care is a business issue for the obvious reason that employees cannot come to work unless their dependents are cared for. Study after study shows that most working families have trouble arranging care, and that those with the most difficulty also experience the most frequent work disruptions and the greatest absenteeism."[17]

Equity and Family-Friendly Benefits

Employers are reluctant to appear to favor certain employees over other employees in the benefits they offer. In the past, equity meant treating all employees the same, including offering everyone the same benefits package. Today, though, the definition of equity has evolved into treating all employees fairly but not necessarily identically. Benefit flexibility is beginning to be viewed as an asset, essential for attracting and retaining the skilled workers necessary for today's competitive work environment. Additionally, benefit programs developed to meet dependent care needs, such as flexible work schedules, cafeteria benefit programs and information and referral services, can actually serve all employees. Furthermore, employee dependent care needs change over time, and a benefit not needed today by one group of employees may be essential tomorrow.

Most employees do not view family-friendly benefits as inequitable. Surveys have indicated that almost all employees — including both employees with and without current dependent care needs — rate work and family programs and policies as a positive enhancement of the workplace. They generally report a favorable response to these programs, as well as an improved overall feeling about the company itself.[18]

Determining the Benefits

Once you've presented a strong case and your employer has been motivated to implement family-friendly benefits, the type of specific benefit program to offer must be determined. When deciding which benefit policies or programs to offer, it is essential that employers and employees consider how many employees need or would use a benefit, the cost of the benefit, how the benefit fits into the organizational culture and whether the benefit will actually solve a management program, such as excessive turnover, tardiness or absenteeism.

There are four steps in the development and implementation of family-friendly policies. This process can be used successfully by any size company.

1) **Conduct an employee and an employer needs assessment.**

To be effective in minimizing work and family conflicts, family-friendly benefit programs must be driven by documented employer and employee needs and goals.

The usual method for determining employee and employer needs is to design and conduct a survey. Focus groups or small discussion groups are an alternative method, which small employers may find more cost-effective. However, the information collected through focus or discussion groups is generally less quantitative. Focus or discussion groups can also be used in addition to a survey instrument.

The goal of the employee needs assessment is the development of a demographic profile of employees. The profile should include information on: what kinds of dependent care needs

Family-Friendly Policy Development and Implementation

- Conduct needs assessment
- Compare desired benefit program with available resources
- Sell the program internally and externally
- Monitor and improve the program

employees have; which group, if any, of employees has the most needs; how dependent care needs affect job performance; and what type of benefit programs will address work and family conflicts most effectively.

The employer needs assessment should provide information on the employer's goals and resources, and should also evaluate how the company's other benefit programs and policies affect the work and family arena. The employer's goals should be clearly articulated and considered. In other words, the employer needs assessment should determine if the employer is seeking to increase productivity, reduce tardiness, absenteeism or turnover, or all of the above. Company resources and limitations should be carefully weighed. The costs of benefit programs vary considerably, and this information should be balanced with the desired goal and available resources.

Consultants are often utilized in this stage of the process. They can provide expert advice on designing the method to assess both employer and employee needs, as well as assisting with program development and implementation.

2) **Compare the desired benefit programs with available resources.**

Step 2 involves examining the current dependent care situation in the community and considering partnership options. This process reveals if dependent care problems stem from accessibility, affordability or availability, and assists employers in providing the most useful benefit programs. An examination of community services will identify gaps and shortages and will prevent the employer from duplicating services which already exist.

Sources of information about community services include: resource and referral agencies; state and local government agencies and offices; state licensing agencies; college and university departments of child development, gerontology, social work or business; professional or civic associations; and service providers.

3) **Sell the program internally and externally.**

Employers and employees will not benefit from the new programs if they are not effectively publicized and implemented. Managers should be provided with information and training in the administration of new benefit programs and policies. Publicity campaigns should also be developed which provide information about and reinforce use of the new benefit programs. These efforts pay off in enhanced recruitment and retention, as well as improved community relations.

4) **Monitor and improve the program.**

Employers should periodically evaluate the program and measure the benefit's effectiveness. Evaluations should determine if the benefit programs are fulfilling the employer's objectives in a cost-effective manner, and if the benefit programs continue to be the best method to meet employee needs.

Family-Friendly Benefit Program Options

Informational/Educational Assistance
- Resource Guides
- Family Support Groups
- Dependent Care Seminars
- Caregiver Fairs
- Resource & Referral Agencies

Financial Assistance
- Preferential Admission
- Discounts
- Subsidies
- Vouchers
- After school/summer programs
- DCAPs

Direct Care Services
- On-site centers
- Consortium Centers

Flexible Benefits
- Cafeteria Benefits
- Flexible Savings Plans

Flexible Work Policies
- Flextime
- Telecommuting
- Job Sharing
- Part-time Jobs

Dependent Care Benefit Options

There are a variety of company-sponsored benefits and programs. An employer's size, industry, location and economic condition, among other factors, will influence which option[s] to offer. The most common programs and policies are discussed below.

Informational and educational assistance

The number of companies involved in providing informational and educational services to their employees has increased significantly in the past decade. This type of benefit program is relatively easy to institute and administer, and start-up and maintenance costs are minimal.

Employers can provide information and education through the development of a community resource guide, the establishment of family support groups in the workplace, or by sponsoring seminars on dependent care issues or caregiver fairs. A low-cost, low-effort option is also to provide employees with brochures describing federal, state and community dependent care programs and resources.

Many companies also contract with outside Resource and Referral Agencies. These agencies assist employees in determining what specific kinds of dependent care services they need and locating providers of such services. Resource and Referral agencies also provide information on financial or legal matters. For example, elder care resource and referral agencies provide information on medical services, home health workers, housing alternatives, home meal delivery, senior citizen centers and case management services.

Financial assistance

Employers have a variety of ways in which to provide financial assistance to employees with dependent care needs. Services include preferential admission at local centers, discounts or subsidies at local centers, vouchers for participation in emergency care and sick care programs and after school and summer programs for school-age children.

Offering these services allows the employer to provide a tangible benefit without a great deal of risk or much in the way of up-front costs. These benefits are also easy to implement and administer, but their success is totally dependent on the availability and quality of existing community resources.

Employers can also offer their employees an opportunity for tax savings through salary reduction agreements. If an employer meets the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requirements for a Dependent Care Assistance Program (DCAP), employees can set aside a portion of their salary in a flexible spending account which can then be used to pay for eligible dependent care expenses with pretax dollars. Employees and the employer save because no taxes are paid on the money set aside in the account. Moreover, the costs to employers of implementing a DCAP are only the legal costs of establishing the program and administrative costs. These costs are usually offset by the resulting tax savings.

Direct care services

Direct care services include providing on-site or near-site day care for children and elders. Direct care centers can be owned and operated by the employer, or the day-to-day management of the center can be contracted out. The advantages of offering direct care services include: the provision of an attractive, effective labor recruitment and retention tool; a reduction in absenteeism and tardiness; improved community relations resulting from the high visibility involvement in dependent care issue; and enhanced flexibility of operating hours of the center, which can be adapted to shift requirements and employee needs. The disadvantages are high start-up and maintenance costs, and this type of assistance may serve a more limited pool of employees.

An alternative to an employer-owned center is a consortium center. Through consortium centers, groups of employers can share the costs and benefits of establishing and operating dependent care centers. This is an especially attractive option for small employers. Many consortium centers have resulted from a coordinated effort between real estate developers, existing child care organizations and companies located in the real estate dealer's business parks.

Flexible benefit programs

Flexible benefit plans give employees the option to pick and choose their fringe benefits. Employees participate in only those programs which best meet their personal and dependent care needs. Typically, some basic level of benefit is designated as the core benefit, which all employees must have. Employees then receive credits, generated by employer contributions based on the employee's salary and tenure, which are used to purchase either expanded coverage of core benefits or optional benefits. The advantages to flexible benefit programs are they provide an equitable benefit program which responds to the needs of a diverse work force and benefit costs can be more effectively controlled. The disadvantages are that implementation and administrative costs may be high, and final regulations on tax laws governing these programs have not been issued, due to ongoing debates over tax reform and budget deficits.

Flexible Work Policies

Work policies which accommodate dependent care needs include flexible schedules, the ability to use sick leave to care for dependents, part-time employment with benefit coverage, job sharing and telecommuting.

Flexible schedules allow employees to choose arrival and departure times within a range set by the employer. Generally, all employees work during core business hours, and they work the same number of hours per day. Some workers may also work a compressed work week, squeezing full-time hours into a four-day work week. Some companies also provide their employees with the option to take several hours off in the middle of the work day. This enables employees to visit children's schools, prepare meals for dependents, and meet a variety of other dependent care needs.

A flexible workplace, more commonly known as telecommuting, allows employees more control over their work schedule and eliminates the time and hassles spent commuting. Many communities are exploring this option not only to provide people with flexibility in meeting work and family responsibilities but also as a way to reduce pollution and traffic overloads caused in part by commuters.

Job sharing involves two people sharing the responsibilities and duties of one job. Job sharing works well in professional positions that cannot be easily separated into two part-time jobs. This option also affords employers the ability to pair more experienced employees with less experienced employees, and also gives the employer more flexibility since both employees can be in the office during peak hours.

Part-time schedules, similar to flexible schedules and telecommuting, allow people to balance work and family needs. However, offering part-time employment is a family-friendly policy only if benefits are also provided, and if part-timers have opportunities for career advancement. The reality is, however, that part-time workers are generally the first to be excluded from both private-sector and public-sector family support policies; they are often ineligible for employer-provided family benefits; and they are typically excluded from state and federal family support legislation.[19]

The advantages of flexible schedules are numerous and are especially useful in assisting employees with elder care responsibilities.[20] Flexible benefit programs work — and many employees prefer this type of policy over other benefit programs.[21] Research indicates that flexible workplace policies are successful in meeting both employee needs and employer expectations.

Flexible work schedules have been shown to reduce or eliminate tardiness, improve attitudes, reduce absenteeism and increase recruiting advantages. Additionally, since implementation costs are so low, little is needed to show a return on investment for flextime. Eighty percent of companies surveyed in an American Management Association study reported no change in personnel administrative costs, training costs or support services due to the adoption and implementation of flextime.[22]

With an occasional exception, the introduction of flexible work schedules produces a generally positive shift in employee attitudes and does not result in abuses. Flexible schedules are beneficial to employees with family responsibilities in two ways: they allow an employee to arrange more time with the family; and they reduce work-family conflicts by eliminating or reducing scheduling problems.[23]

Flexible schedules might grow in popularity if employees were not afraid to take advantage of the benefit. A Conference Board survey revealed that employees in 70 percent of companies offering flexible schedules avoided using flextime because they believed that "face-time," i.e. actual time in the office, was more important to their bosses than actual output.[24] With appropriate training for both supervisors and employees, however, this cost-effective approach could be utilized more widely.

Changing Corporate Culture

The corporate culture is evolving as a result of the changes in the work force. To compete for skilled workers today, companies are shifting from a one-size-fits-all approach to a more flexible, varied response. According to a survey by Hay and Huggins Company, a benefits consulting firm, many companies have expanded their work and family benefits as part of a strategic plan to retain employees.[25] In general, employers who offer benefit programs that assist employees in balancing their work and family lives are in a better position to attract and retain qualified, productive employees.[26]

The shift in the environment of the workplace and changes in benefits are likely to continue. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "The last 75 years have seen the American family shift from a large, extended group to a smaller, individualized network of families with widely varying characteristics. During this same period, employers have progressed from providing no benefits, to providing a standard package of benefits designed for a male-supported family, to providing innovative and flexible benefits to meet differing family needs. While the future cannot be predicted, it is safe to assume that benefit plans will remain a major element of compensation and will continue to evolve to meet the needs of a changing labor force."[27] A few businesses have even adopted a new term, "work-life" as opposed to "work-family," to describe their benefit programs and corporate philosophy.

In today's work environment, it is increasingly in the best interest of companies to provide a family-friendly workplace. Changing demographics, especially the increase in working women, global competition and the hidden costs of excessive turnover and lowered productivity resulting from work and family conflicts are all driving the heightened interest in work and family programs. Benefit programs that allow employees to balance work and family have a positive influence on the corporate bottom line and on the family bottom line. Implementing family-friendly programs and policies can be viewed as only a feel-good response to a social issue, but in reality companies are making a smart economic decision and positioning themselves as strong competitors for the future

The movie *9 to 5* pits three female employees — a supervisor of the clerical staff, a recently hired clerical worker and the boss's personal secretary — against an obnoxious and underqualified boss. After a series of mishaps leads him to think that they've tried to kill him by putting rat poison in his coffee, the employees hold him captive to prevent him from turning them in to the police. They then take advantage of his absence to implement flextime, job sharing, a company-sponsored, on-site child care center and various other family-friendly policies. Productivity and morale soar, and the Chairman of the Board is quite pleased with the effect of the programs on the company's bottom-line. So pleased, in fact, that the boss is "promoted" to a position with an overseas subsidiary, and everyone else lives happily ever after. Of course, the transformation of a work environment into a family-friendly one is never as easy in real life as it is in reel life — but the effects on productivity and competitiveness portrayed in *9 to 5* are true-to-life.

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