

## Employer Programs Offer Support to Employees Serving as Family Caregivers



## Significance of Trend

Most of the care that older Americans receive is from their children, other relatives, and friends. Each year, approximately 34 million Americans provide unpaid care to an adult age 50 or older. More than half of unpaid family caregivers are employed either part- or full-time, and face the challenge of balancing the care of a loved one with the demands of maintaining employment. Per one study, 60 percent of caregivers were employed at some point in the past year while caregiving. Among these working adult caregivers, 61 percent reported having at least one impact or change to their employment situation because of caregiving, including going to work late, leaving early, or taking time off to deal with caregiving issues.<sup>1</sup> Caregivers who must cut back on work hours or leave the workforce may lose income, Social Security and other retirement benefits, and career opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Absenteeism among full-time U.S. workers acting as caregivers costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$25 billion in lost productivity annually.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, employees providing care for an older person report increased health problems that cost U.S. employers an estimated \$13 billion annually, a figure that does not include costs associated with caring for a spouse or a younger family member.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP Public Policy Institute, Caregiving in the U.S. 2015, pp. 6, 55, 60-61.

<sup>2</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Families Caring for an Aging America, 2016, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Witters, Gallup Business Journal, Caregiving Costs U.S. Economy \$25.2 Billion in Lost Productivity, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> MetLife Mature Market Group, National Alliance for Caregiving, and the University of Pittsburgh Institute on Aging, The MetLife Study of Working Caregivers and Employer Health Care Costs, 2010, p. 4.

## Trend in Health Care

Experts and stakeholders have long urged employers to offer programs to reduce the stress of caregiving and minimize its effects in the workplace. Potential strategies include education and training (e.g., seminars, guest speakers), access to geriatric care managers, flexible work hours, and dependent care accounts.

There are signs of progress in responding to the challenges that employee caregivers face. Increasingly, companies are implementing employment policies that facilitate caregiving by reducing work-related barriers (e.g., expanded leave, remote work arrangements) and by providing on-site consultation support and resources for their employees with caregiving responsibilities.<sup>5</sup> From 2008 to 2014, the share of employers that offer their employees information about elder-care services rose from 31 percent to 43 percent, a study showed.<sup>6</sup>

## Trends to Watch

The following summary of promising programs and practices illustrates how employers have been responding to the growing need to support employees who have family caregiving responsibilities. The examples include three employer initiatives as well as an employer-focused coalition that seeks to create a business environment that better supports employee caregivers. These represent notable efforts to address the overall trend, but many other employer-led initiatives are also addressing the challenge of supporting employee caregivers.

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<sup>5</sup> Brigid Schulte, [Aging population prompts more employers to offer elder-care benefits to workers](#), Washington Post, November 16, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Families and Work Institute, [2014 National Study of Employers](#), Table 12: Elder Care Assistance from 2008 to 2014, p. 31.

**Trend Watch:  
Deloitte's  
Expanded  
Family Leave  
Program**

Deloitte LLP, a U.S. professional services firm, launched a new family leave program in September 2016 that includes support for employees providing care for aging parents or dealing with a range of other life events. The Deloitte plan offers men and women up to 16 weeks of fully paid leave, including maternity and paternity leave, elder care, and aid for other sick family members or partners and was built to recognize the changing family dynamics of employees.<sup>7</sup> As evidence for the value of such a program, Deloitte cited its 2016 online poll of 1,000 U.S. workers, which found that 88 percent of respondents would value expansion of paid leave policies to include family care beyond parental leave. Given the lack of a national mandate for such employee benefits, “competitive employers are beginning to catch on and offer broader paid caregiving leave,” the Huffington Post noted in a report on the Deloitte program.<sup>8</sup>

**Trend Watch:  
Duke University's  
Employee  
Elder Care  
Consultation  
Services**

The Duke Employee Elder Care Consultation Service has been operating since 2000 as a no-cost, employee-family benefit available as needed in a crisis. The service operates under the auspices of the Duke Family Support Program,<sup>9</sup> which since 1980 has served families and professionals involved in caring for persons with memory disorders in North Carolina, in addition to Duke employees seeking help with elder care. In 2012, 133 Duke employees used the consultations to learn about dementia, resources for seniors, and tools to cope with the stress of caregiving.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/press-releases/deloitte-announces-sixteen-weeks-of-fully-paid-family-leave-time-for-caregiving.html>

<sup>8</sup> Huffington Post. “Deloitte just gave its workers 16 weeks paid leave for caregiving.” [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/deloitte-just-gave-its-workers-16-weeks-paid-leave-for-caregiving\\_us\\_57d17126e4b03d2d4598b151](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/deloitte-just-gave-its-workers-16-weeks-paid-leave-for-caregiving_us_57d17126e4b03d2d4598b151)

<sup>9</sup> [www.dukefamilysupport.org/services](http://www.dukefamilysupport.org/services)

<sup>10</sup> Marsha A. Green, [Help Caring for Aging Parents](#), *Working@Duke*, September 5, 2013.

**Trend Watch:  
Emory University  
Caregiver Support  
Program**

All Duke University staff and faculty who care for aging parents or relatives are eligible for a free, confidential elder care consultation at the Duke medical campus in Durham, NC. Employees are contacted no later than 24 hours after they request a consultation. Two social workers staff the program in the Duke University Center for Aging, providing consultations that last 60 to 90 minutes, and offering follow-up consultation by email or telephone as requested.<sup>11</sup> The National Alliance for Caregiving recognized Duke in 2012 as a leader in implementing best practices in workplace elder care.

Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, launched a new program in 2013 to support employees responsible for the care of an aging, sick, or chronically ill adult family member. Under the Emory Caregiver Support Program, the Emory WorkLife Resource Center offers free care consultations to university employees with adult caregiving responsibilities.<sup>12</sup> A specialist with a professional background in aging services is available to assist employees in person or by telephone. In announcing the new program after two years of research and planning, Emory outlined policy changes<sup>13</sup> to enhance support of employees with adult caregiving responsibilities, increased efforts to support workplace flexibility on campus, and other benefits to address the caregiving needs of employees and their family members. The initiative drew on findings from a 2010 dependent care needs assessment showing that nearly 15 percent of employees were responsible for caring for an elderly or sick parent or relative, with nearly 60 percent of respondents expressing concern about balancing work and caring for an older, disabled or chronically ill family member within the next 3 years. The National Alliance for Caregiving

<sup>11</sup> Lisa P. Gwyther and Bobbi G. Matchar, The Duke Employee Elder Care Consultation: Meeting Employees Where They Are, *Generations*, 39:4, December 1, 2015

<sup>12</sup> <http://worklife.emory.edu/adultcare/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.worklife.emory.edu/adultcare/news/introducecaregiversupport.html>

**Trend Watch:  
Respect A  
Caregiver's  
Time  
(ReACT)**

recognized Emory in 2012 as a leader in implementing best practices in workplace elder care.

ReACT is an employer-focused coalition that addresses the challenges faced by employee caregivers and the companies that employ them. Representing nearly one million employees through its membership of nearly 50 companies and non-profit organizations.<sup>14</sup> ReACT's website offers links to resources, including employee caregiver facts and figures, caregiving resources, and an employer resource guide as components of its mission to create a supportive business environment for caregivers.

One resource, *Best Practices in Workplace Eldercare*, is a 40-page report<sup>15</sup> on a study conducted for ReACT by the National Alliance for Caregiving. The report identifies trends and innovations in workplace policies and practices that support employees with elder-care responsibilities, and includes brief case studies from 17 employers that participated in the study. In addition, ReACT collaborated with AARP to develop a 20-page report, *Determining the Return on Investment: Supportive Policies for Employee Caregivers*, to create the business case for caregiver-supportive policies in the workplace.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <http://respectcaregivers.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/BestPracticesEldercareFinal1.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://respectcaregivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/AARP-ROI-Report-FINAL-4.1.16.pdf>