

Supporting Employees Who Are Caring for an Older Relative or Friend

1st November 2020

It may not be obvious to you in your role as a manager, but it's likely that many of the employees you supervise are caring for an older relative or friend. Providing care is time-consuming and stressful and it has an impact on employee health, productivity and wellbeing. In this article you'll find helpful suggestions on how to offer resources and support to the people you manage who may be caring for an older relative or friend.

Millions of employees are caregivers

Consider these facts uncovered in a 2015 caregiver survey by Ceridian HCM:

- More than eight million Canadians provide some type of care to an ill or elderly, dependent loved one.
- Nearly three million Canadian caregivers are also working at a job, and the majority of those employees are full-time employees.
- On average, caregivers report they dedicate roughly 24 hours each week to managing caregiving duties, and they estimate missing 10 days of work each year directly as a result of those responsibilities.
- More than 40% of caregivers also have dependent children at home.
- Employees of all ages report being caregivers, including the youngest employees in the workforce.
- The Ceridian study estimates the cost to Canadian employers due to lost productivity/absenteeism of employee caregivers is as high as \$5 billion annually.

Ways to support employees with caregiving responsibilities

There are several steps managers can take to support caregiving employees, and to boost productivity, engagement, and wellbeing. These include:

Be sure employees are aware of the assistance program. Encourage employees to take advantage of these programs. Research shows caregivers need information on managing stress, keeping a loved one safe, balancing work and family, and finding resources, services, and support. The assistance program offers help with these and many other issues, and is

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available 24/7.

Get to know employees. Without being intrusive, take an interest in people's lives outside of work so that employees feel comfortable enough to share information about a caregiving challenge they may be facing.

Offer flexibility to support employees in performing their jobs to the best of their ability. Become familiar with the flexible work options your organization offers and what you need to do to request an arrangement for an employee. That might mean temporarily agreeing to adjust an employee's schedule or hours, or using sick leave to care for a family member who is ill.

If an employee needs additional time off to handle caregiving responsibilities, consult with your Human Resources (HR) representative. Employers may be required to provide qualifying employees with compassionate care leave, protected by the *Canada Labour Code* for federally-regulated employees, and under provincial/territorial employment standards for non-federally-regulated employees. Compassionate care benefits may be available to eligible employees through the Government of Canada's Employment Insurance program.

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