

# 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. More than 1 in 6 American workers are caregivers for a parent, relative, or friend. Twenty-eight percent of those caregivers report that their employers are unaware of their caregiving status.

Caregiving 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.

## Ways to support employees with caregiving responsibilities

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

Making sure employees are aware of the assistance program. Encourage employees to take advantage of it. 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 is a benefit that offers assistance with these and many other issues.

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 use sick leave to care for a family member who is ill.

If an employee needs additional time off to handle caregiving responsibilities or deal with an emergency, consult with HR. Under certain conditions, employers may be required to provide qualifying employees with unpaid leave during any 12-month period under the

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Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), a federal law.

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