

Tips for How Employers Can Support Employees with Children

The following tips are in response to a question raised by members of the [Whatcom COVID-19 Employer Support Task Force](#) in August, 2020. For more tips for employers, visit whatcomtogether.org.

Since the coronavirus led to school and childcare closures, working parents have been juggling work responsibilities and caring for children at the same time. For many families with school-age children, this school year will include online classes and adjusting to new schedules and expectations. This will add stress to an already stressful situation for working parents.

According to a late June 2020 survey of 136 working parents, 33% reported at least one parent had left their job or cut back to part-time, and 70% of the employees who left the workplace were women ([Working Mother](#)).

Here are some ways employers can help ease the burden on families and retain employees during this challenging time:

- **Understand the laws:** Find out if the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#) applies to you. The FFCRA is designed to support families by requiring paid sick leave and paid expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. Employers required to provide leave under the FFCRA are eligible for reimbursement of the costs through refundable tax credits. For further information, see [FFCRA Questions & Answers](#).
- **Communicate to understand employees' situations:** Open communication is essential for understanding how to accommodate the changing needs of employees with children. Especially for employers who do not have children themselves, it will be important to establish open dialogue with employees to understand how the pandemic is impacting their home and work life. Check-in frequently, express compassion and understanding, and listen for opportunities to be accommodating and relieve workers' stress.
- **Tailor accommodations:** Many factors will determine the types of accommodations needed for each employee (e.g., number of children and their ages, number of adult caregivers available to help out, type of work tasks the employee does, etc.). Take the time to find out what the needs and limitations are for each employee, and work with them to re-define success so that both of you share realistic workload and performance expectations.
- **Be as flexible as possible:** Seek ways to increase flexibility with schedules and deadlines. Allow employees to set their own schedules and work from home as much as possible. **Reduce the number of mandatory meetings** and work with employees to find the best times for the most important meetings.
- **Offer child care benefits:** Consider if your business or organization can provide child care services onsite or help employees pay for child care. The IRS allows companies to claim 10% or 25% of the cost (up to \$150,000 per year) for providing or subsidizing child care services.
 - **Establish a [dependent care Flexible Spending Account](#)** so that employees can get a pre-tax payroll deduction to help them save for expenses to care for children or an incapacitated adult dependent.

References:

- [Accommodating Working Parents During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). SHRM; July 30, 2020.
- [More than a Quarter of Parents Plan to Take a Break or Permanently Quit Their Job](#). Working Mother; July 14, 2020.
- [7 Ways Employers Can Support Working Parents During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Gusto Blog; July 16, 2020.
- [Three Creative Ways Small Businesses Are Supporting Employees With Kids During the Pandemic](#). Inc.; July 16, 2020.