

balance sheets

A series of information sheets for employers interested in helping employees balance their work, family, and personal responsibilities

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Xsheets™

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"A segment of The Baxter Allegiance Foundation grant supported maternal and child health programs such as The Prenatal Care Coordination Program and Healthy Steps for Young Children, totaling more than \$241,000 in 1997. By strengthening the link between Baxter's philanthropic arm and work & life initiatives, we expand employee awareness of internal resources and highlight Foundation grants that help create healthier communities and improve the accessibility of quality care, especially projects that expand and improve care for our local children."

Donna Namath,
Consultant, Work/Life Initiatives
Baxter Healthcare Corporation

"As the country's leading not-for-profit healthcare organization, Kaiser Permanente has taken a leadership role in promoting community policies and programs that support the health of young children. As a part of our commitment, this summer we will host a series of leadership forums to discuss issues related to early childhood development; forum participants will include public and private sector leaders from across the country. In addition, we'll examine what businesses are doing to support new and expectant parents, and the prevalence of early childhood development programs in corporate America."

David M. Lawrence, M.D.
Chairman and CEO,
Kaiser Foundation Health Plans and Hospitals

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Fostering Infant Wellness Through Workplace Initiatives

Employers are developing strategies which give children a *Healthy Start**, through community initiatives and programs to benefit employee parents. Efforts in this are include:

- Maternal preconception and pre and post-natal care
- On-site breastfeeding support
- Infant/early childhood information seminars
- Access to and/or information on immunizations
- Car seat rental or discount programs
- Access to maternal/infant/early childhood mental health programs/counseling
- Parenting and child safety classes

THE BOTTOM LINE

- One unhealthy birth can cost anywhere from \$20,000 to more than \$1 million, compared to about \$6,400 for a normal healthy birth. In addition to the direct health care costs, the related costs of increased absenteeism, higher disability costs and lowered productivity magnify the problem. (*Business, Babies, and the Bottom Line: Corporate Innovations and Best Practices in Maternal and Child Health, Washington Business Group on Health, 1996*)
- Healthy babies make healthy companies is the message from Cigna Healthcare. The results of their two-year study from 1991-93 found that the company lowered its medical costs nearly \$2.7 million in those two years by promoting a wellness program for pregnant employees and their spouses. (*San Francisco Chronicle, 9/26/94*)
- PacificCare of California saved \$52,285 in 1994 by having onsite lactation facilities equipped with electronic breast pumps, counseling and nurses. The company figures cost savings through replacement costs, reduced absenteeism, and reduced health care costs, which more than offset the \$12,000 it cost to run the program.
- Investing in children from birth is a cost effective strategy for business and society. For every dollar we invest in preschool, we save \$7.61 in welfare costs, prison reform, and educational reform. (*Child Care Information Exchange 9/97*)

Employers have a vested interest in supporting prenatal health and infant development. Not only are they concerned about the health and productivity of their current workforce, but also that of future workers. Family-friendly employers are seeing bottom-line effects such as: lowered health-care costs, quicker returns to work, and decreased employee turnover, from maternal and child health programs. There is growing evidence from both the American Academy of Pediatrics and recently released research on human brain development which supports that the best way to ensure a healthy child and a healthy adult is to give infants a healthy start.

MODEL PROGRAMS

Baxter Healthcare, Deerfield, IL

Baxter developed a program aimed at reducing low birth weight and infant mortality, and encouraging healthy pregnancies in 1992 at their Marion, North Carolina manufacturing plant. *Solutions for Healthy Babies* includes time off during work time to attend a series of eight classes conducted during all three shifts on topics such as: growth and development, pregnancy and stress, nutrition, prenatal care, care of a newborn, etc. Onsite nurses coordinate the classes. The company also offers lactation rooms at several of their locations. During 1997, 30 mothers used the room at corporate headquarters.

Eddie Bauer, Redmond, WA

Eddie Bauer rolled out the *Home & Healthy Program* company-wide (US and Canada) in July, 1996. This program offers a fully paid post-partum home visit by a registered pediatric nurse within 72 hours of birth. All female associates, spouses of male associates, and their newborn children, regardless of whether they are on a medical plan or not, are eligible. In 1996, they also introduced a separate *New Mother's Room* complete with a breast pump and refrigerator; associates pay for the kit. A side benefit is that often several moms use the room at one time, and have formed informal support groups.

Kaiser Permanente, Oakland, CA

In January 1996, headquarters opened a private lactation room equipped with two electric breast pumps. Supervisors are provided with information to encourage support of employees who want to pump. The lactation room supports the goals of Kaiser Permanente's Northern California Perinatal Council, in

conjunction with the US Department of Health and Human Services, to promote an increase in the number of new mother members who choose to breastfeed their babies. The lactation room has been very well received. Employees who use it are grateful that KP is supporting them in this way, and say it has greatly eased their transitions back to work after the birth of their babies.

Levi Strauss & Co., San Francisco, CA

Levi Strauss & Co. offers lactation programs in their headquarters, as well as in four of their domestic plant locations. Program features include: private lactation rooms, 50% subsidy for pumping equipment, onsite occupational health nurses, and available EAP counselors to discuss health and parenting issues. The company plans to expand the program into other locations because they have been so successful.

Motorola, Schaumburg, IL

In 1991, the company began offering a prenatal risk assessment and education program, *Special Delivery*. This program is voluntary and available to employees, spouses and eligible dependents covered under either of two self-funded indemnity health plans. Program highlights include: risk assessments provided by obstetrical nurses, pre and post-natal educational materials, risk management intervention, and a 24-hour baby hotline to answer participant questions. As an incentive, the program gives a personalized baby blanket and \$100 US savings bond to employees and spouses who enroll in the first trimester. Motorola also has lactation rooms available at many locations nationwide.

Pacific Bell, San Ramon, CA

Pacific Bell developed *Health Promotion Programs* which motivate their employees through healthier lifestyles. Specific maternal and child health programs include: *Health Information Program* (HIP), employees, retirees, and dependents can access this confidential information on health topics by calling a toll-free number; *Step-In-Time*, a pre-pregnancy/pre-natal program implemented in 1988; a Health Promotion Video Library. In a recent evaluation effort, Pacific Bell compared average length of stays in the hospital of participants in their program with those of local HMOs, their participants generally had lower average length of stays (2.83 days vs. 3.1 days).

San Mateo County, CA

San Mateo County uses a comprehensive workbook, given to all prospective parents, to communicate information on leaves of absences, health and safety issues (for the mother and the child), disability and medical benefits, and available community resources. Employees and their spouses/partners are encouraged to attend the *Babies and You* prenatal education classes which include such topics as: *Managing Stress During Pregnancy* and *Men Have Babies Too-Fatherhood*. Also the county has recently added a corporate lactation program which is offered in conjunction with *Our Place*, the county's onsite child care center.

Trust Insurance, Taunton, MA

As part of their *Child Health Program*, Trust offers free consultations with a behavioral specialist, effective January 1998. Parents can call and ask questions or set an appointment to have her come to their homes. Trust offers a Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) program free of charge to all interested associates. The class, held twice weekly for seven weeks, is led by a school adjustment counselor. Additionally, the company has added a lactation room. Trust also provides a company sponsored, monthly, free immunization program for the children of the community.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

Focus on the Whole Family

Responsive employers recognize that fathers play an integral role in the healthy development of infants. Initiatives which encourage and support the role of fathers, such as brown bag parenting seminars, will have more long term success.

Remove Financial Barriers

There are currently over 10 million children in the U.S. without health insurance. Concerned employers can take a leadership role in alleviating this healthcare crisis by helping children in their community gain access to immunizations and prenatal care.

Enable Employees to Participate in Program Design

As with all work/life initiatives, a grassroots perspective can be very valuable. Often employee parents are already active in infant wellness programs, and may be able to facilitate corporate participation.

In April of 1997, IBM, Armont, NY created a CD-ROM as a complement to the "I Am Your Child Campaign" which highlights the new research on brain development. For example, new technology can now show that a significant portion of the connections needed to sustain the brain throughout its lifecycle are made by the age of three. The CD-ROM describes the stages of a child's growth in the first three years, answers questions frequently asked by parents, and offers resources and expert advice. The "I Am your Child Campaign" also includes a video funded by Johnson & Johnson, a parent brochure developed by the AT&T Foundation, and a website, www.iamyourchild.org.

The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that all infants be breastfed through the first year of life; evidence shows that breastfed children are half as likely to have any illnesses in the first year as formula fed children and 10 times less likely to be hospitalized for any bacterial infection. (*The Potential Costs of Not Breastfeeding, BEST-Start Kentucky*)

Employers can support nursing mothers by providing them with the opportunity and flexibility to express their milk while at the workplace.

Components of a Successful Lactation Room

- A private and convenient location
- A comfortable chair
- Adequate lighting
- Access to secure refrigeration
- Access to electricity for breast pumps
- Breast pump rentals or discounts

* One of the Children's Defense Fund's goals is to educate the nation about the needs of children and encourage investment in children, thus ensuring every child a Healthy Start. For further information see their website, www.childrensdefense.org.