

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™

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

The Center for
Work & Family
BOSTON COLLEGE
CARROLL SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

One Small Step 

MIDWESTERN
WORK-FAMILY
ASSOCIATION  CENTER FOR
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“There’s a recognition that if people are worried about what their children are doing, they’re not going to be fully engaged at work. With the work force becoming more mature, more of our employees have school-aged kids. And it is a real worry if you have a 13-year-old at home now with nothing to do.”

Sue Osborn

*Work-Family Coordinator
Chevron Corporation*

“By offering a summer camp to children of employees, we address two important corporate goals – responding to our employees’ work/family needs and inspiring children’s interest in science in ways that are fun and hands on.”

Candi Lange, Director

*Workforce Partnering Initiatives
Eli Lilly & Company*

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Care for School-Age Children

Definition: Care for children between the ages of five and 13, during the hours before and after school, and during school vacations and holidays. Employer support may take the form of providing direct child care services, offering information to employees regarding programs and providers in their area or supporting community programs that fulfill this need.

While much attention is often focused on the need for pre-school child care, employee concerns about child care do not end when school begins. Because children are in school fewer hours than their parents work, it is necessary for employees with school-age children to find care that will accommodate both their work schedule and their children’s time out of school.

Employers are increasingly recognizing the drain on productivity and morale that concerns about school-age children create for their employees. Some companies report jammed phone lines in the mid-afternoon when parents check on their children after school. On a positive note, employers who have implemented school-age programs or policies report increased retention of employees who take advantage of such benefits.

Other reasons for taking steps to assist employees who need school-age care include: 1) maintaining safety in the community (according to a 1997 FBI report, more children get into trouble between 3:00 and 8:00 p.m. than any other time); and 2) providing for a competent work force in the future. A 1997 research study published by Pettitt and Laird, Bates, Dodge concludes that quality care outside of school does impact academic performance.

Care for school-age children is provided in a variety of environments including child care centers, family day care homes, schools, churches or synagogues, recreation centers and by other community agencies.

Employer-supported programs for school-age children generally fall into one of three categories:

1. On or near-site programs for employees’ school-age children including before and after-school programs and vacation/holiday activities.
2. Information and resources for employees that have school-age children including resource and referral services, tax-free salary set-asides for dependent care and flexible work arrangements.
3. Support for community programs that serve school-age children including financial contributions and participation in community partnerships.

MODEL PROGRAMS

Since 1990, the **City of Palo Alto** in CA has offered access to extended day care services to families in the community through a partnership with the Palo Alto Unified School District. The school-age programs are operated at local elementary schools by a school-age child care provider who coordinates their activities with the school district calendar. The before and after school programs are extended to full day programs during school vacations, holidays, staff development days and summer breaks. Enrollment has increased to over 800 children in 1997.

“Camp GTE” provides snow emergency and holiday child care to the employees of **GTE** in Needham, Waltham and Taunton, MA, and Chantilly, VA. The camp, which is run by a child care provider, also runs for one week during the summer. Parents pre-register their children each September for the programs they are interested in. Children in grade K-6 have the opportunity to lunch with their parents as part of the schedule. Parent fees are kept low thanks to a generous subsidy by GTE.

The 9,600 employees of **Lincoln Financial Group** (the marketing name for Lincoln National Corporation and its affiliates) in Fort Wayne, IN, enjoy a unique benefit through the company's in-house resource and referral service. Lincoln has relationships with child care providers in the area that only offer before and after school care and holiday and vacation care. Some providers offer in-home care while others are part of community programs. These 25 providers also receive education and resources from Lincoln including ideas for weekly themes and associated activities. In 1997, Lincoln helped 322 employees find appropriate care for their school age children, both through the network and at the near-site child care center.

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, based in Berkeley, CA, with 3,500 employees, has sponsored a Science Exploration Camp for employees' children since 1995. The six-week program includes recreational and science-oriented activities for second through sixth graders coordinated by a paid Camp Director and Recreation Director. Laboratory employees volunteer at the camp to present science modules and accompany field trips.

At **Harvard University** in Cambridge, MA, faculty and staff can enroll their children in a School Vacation Program during the February and April public school vacation weeks. The full day program for kindergartners through fifth graders also runs during the last week of August, the time between the end of summer camps and the beginning of school. Harvard is currently planning a similar program for middle school-age children.

Since 1993, **Eli Lilly**, headquartered in Indianapolis, IN, with 30,000 employees worldwide, has sponsored a Science Summer Camp. Last summer 375 children of employees participated. The program is run in collaboration with the local YMCA and includes scientific modules designed by Eli Lilly employees, retirees and local school teachers. For example, the “Chemistry is a Blast” theme week explores basic science principles using attention-getting experiments. Friday parent lunches ensure that parents are actively involved in the program.

The Office of Family Resources at **Boston University** in MA collaborates with the University's Housing Office, and the Physical Education, Recreation and Dance Department to implement a creative Summer/School Vacation program for the care of school-age children. The program is available to the children of faculty, staff, students and the local community. Serving approximately 50 families each year, the program utilizes university students as counselors to engage children in grades K-8.

BUSINESS COLLABORATIONS

The **Corporate Council on Out of School Time** in New York City produces publications aimed at parents that member companies distribute to their employees. “Fact and Tips for Parents: A Guide to Summer Care” and “Fact and Tips for Parents” Guide to School Holiday and Vacation Care” provide member company employees with practical guidance and advice, as well as specific information about programs in the New York metropolitan area. For information contact Judy Ennes, (212) 929-7604, ext. 3012.

The **American Business Collaboration for Quality Dependent Care (ABC)**, a group of over 150 companies across the country, supports a variety of school age initiatives. Over \$20M dollars has been allocated to increase the supply and quality of school age programs in over 60 communities. From new science and technology summer camps to theme based training for after school programs, the ABC has had a significant impact on the care their employees use. Recently, care for middle school age children has emerged as more parents are less comfortable leaving this age group home alone. WFD, a human resources consulting firm based in Boston, administers the ABC for member companies. Contact ABC at (800) 346-1535 ext. 3578.

For related information, see the Balance Sheets™ on Back-Up Child Care (1995) and Parental Involvement in School (1997).

CONSIDERATIONS

A 1992 Conference Board report highlighted the following considerations for employers:

- Increasingly, school-age programs are seen as an important part of a comprehensive work-family initiative, often built on the foundation of already-established preschool and elder care programs.
- Holiday programs are easy to pilot, relatively inexpensive to run, conducive to partnerships with community organizations, and a means for addressing one of parents' greatest concerns.
- Many school-age needs are best addressed in the community. Collaboration with other businesses and community groups leverages resources and helps create effective community-based programs.

Employers also should consider the age range they intend to target with their school-age programs. Children ages 14-18 years-old also need supervision, but their needs and interests are quite different from those of younger children.

STATISTICS ON SCHOOL AGE CARE

- According to the Census Bureau's 1991 data, approximately 24 million school-age children require care while their parents are at work.
- School-age children spend 80% of their waking hours outside of school.
- Elementary school students are in school for 1,032 hours a year. Parents employed full-time are away 2,025 hours a year working and commuting. This leaves nearly 1,000 hours a year when children are neither in school nor with parents. (Source: R. Neugebauer, Status Report #1 on School-Age Care, Child Care Info. Exchange, 1993)
- According to the 1991 National Study of Before and After School Programs, 83% of those children enrolled in after-school programs are in the pre-kindergarten through third grade age range.
- An average employee whose school-age child cares for him or herself before and after school misses 13 days of work per year. (Source: R.H. Rosen, The Healthy Company: Eight Strategies to Develop People, Productivity and Profits, 1991)

WEBSITES

California School Age Consortium

<http://www.calsac.org>

National Institute on Out-of-School Time

<http://www.niost.org/>