

# balance sheets

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

This series jointly produced by:



The electronic conversion of the Balance  
Sheets series made possible by:

**ChevronTexaco**

Initial funding to launch the Balance  
Sheets series provided by:



Additional support for the research and writing of this series provided by:



---

*Reproduction by permission only.*

---

Center for Work & Family  
at Boston College  
140 Commonwealth Avenue  
St. Clement's Hall, Rm. 128  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467  
ph: 617-552-2844  
fax: 617-552-2859  
cwf@bc.edu  
[www.bc.edu/centers/cwf/](http://www.bc.edu/centers/cwf/)

Midwestern Work-Family  
Association  
Purdue University  
1267 CDFS Bldg., Room 105  
West Lafayette, IN 47907  
ph: 765-494-6026  
fax: 765-496-1144  
cff@purdue.edu  
[www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/mwfa.html](http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/mwfa.html)

One Small Step  
The Bay Area Employer  
Work & Family Association  
221 Main St, Suite 300  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
ph: 415-808-4315  
fax: 415-856-0906  
info@onesmallstep.org  
[www.onesmallstep.org](http://www.onesmallstep.org)

# balance

# 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  
FAMILIES  
PURDUE  
UNIVERSITY

Copyright © 1999

Reproduction by permission only.

***"Our options are definitely father-friendly in that even our single fathers feel their child care needs are being met."***

Mary Parks

Work & Family Resource Advisor  
Columbus Regional Hospital

***"I'm going to be a father longer than I'll be a working man."***

Bruce Entin

Marketing Vice President  
LSI Logic Corporation

***"Often a man's identity is strongly linked with his career. As men begin to value fatherhood as a central aspect of their identity and esteem, they will begin to shape and demand more parent-friendly work environments."***

Bruce Linton, Ph.D.

Author of "Finding Time for Fatherhood: The Important Considerations Men Face When They Become Parents"

*This issue of the Balance Sheets authored by:*

*Elizabeth Cushing Payne  
Judith David Bloomfield  
One Small Step*

## Fathers in the Workplace

This issue of the Balance Sheets series examines how employers are supporting their employees who are fathers – with paternity leave policies, flexibility, opportunities for education and other efforts to acknowledge fathers' parenting responsibilities.

Men have always traveled between the worlds of work and home. Yet, their work-family issues have received far less attention than those of women. The massive migration of mothers into the workforce has made more visible the challenges of fulfilling responsibilities for employment, child care, and family activities. As a result, the demands on many fathers to participate more actively in child-rearing and family activities have grown significantly.

Whether by economic necessity or personal desire, many fathers are more involved at home, including transporting children to and from child care or school and participating in school-sponsored events and activities. But the pressures at work have not subsided, and fathers often receive far less support from employers and society for fulfilling their multiple roles.

Much has been written about the emotional impact of working on mothers, but we've paid less attention to the same issues for fathers. According to a 1997 Business Week study conducted with the Boston College Center for Work and Family, dads are no more satisfied than moms with their work-family balance. Furthermore, fathers are more likely to say that work spills over into home life.

Yet, until now the work/life field has predominately focused on women's concerns, perhaps because women have been more vocal about the need for change. Even while employers have been careful not to position their work/life benefits as "for women only," few have stepped forward with efforts designed specifically to respond to the unique needs of fathers.

### RELEVANT STATISTICS

- According to a 1997 Catalyst report, 27% of 2,000 fathers surveyed would sacrifice career advancement for more work flexibility.
- 31 companies on the 1999 Working Mother's 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers List provide paid leaves to new fathers, up from 27 in 1998.
- Fathers initiate a significant proportion of the grievances regarding denial of parental leave filed with the US Department of Labor under the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act. (Reported in Scientific American Presents, Summer, 1999)

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Very few men take advantage of father-oriented programs, particularly leave policies.** The obvious reason is financial: an unpaid leave is often not practical for a new father. A less obvious but equally powerful reason was described by Dr. Joseph Pleck in Scientific American Presents, "Within the general belief that it is desirable for fathers to be more involved lurks a hidden qualification: not if it negatively impacts their jobs." For many men, this assumption leads them to not even consider taking advantage of employer-sponsored programs. They simply don't want to be perceived as anything less than 100% committed to their work.

2. **The challenge, then, for employers is more than simply designing and implementing programs for fathers.** Workplace culture must embrace and practice genuine support for fathers' involvement in family life, even as it impacts men's presence and/or performance at work. Without a cultural shift, fathers will be left to struggle privately with competing demands for their energy and time.

Consider your organization: Are fathers visible? Are they comfortable having photos of their families in their workspaces and talking openly about the challenges of parenthood? Do fathers pass up promotions for family reasons? Is it acceptable for fathers to tell co-workers or clients they are leaving early to attend their child's performance or sporting event?

3. **Is the focus on fathers or parents?** In an effort to acknowledge the diversity of families, some companies don't distinguish between mothers, fathers and adoptive parents. The following companies offer a one week paid "parenting" leave in addition to what the Family and Medical Leave Act requires and any time off an employee may have accrued: **Electronic Arts** (Redwood City, CA), **LucasFilm** (San Rafael, CA), and **CNET** (San Francisco, CA). "At Electronic Arts, we feel that paternity policies are a thing of the past. Instead, we focus on the 'parent' and not the 'father'," comments Lori McAdams, Director of Human Resources.

4. **Fathers need specific information about available benefits, not necessarily new programs.** Tell fathers explicitly that your programs are for men too, otherwise they may assume that parental leaves and other policies aimed at parents are really designed for women.

## MODEL PROGRAMS

For the 3,000 employees at **Toyota's** headquarters in Torrance, CA, the company encourages fathers to share their experiences of navigating the demands of work and family through company-sponsored seminars and a Fathers' Forum. The Forum is a small discussion group that meets to exchange parenting tips and ideas for how to meet work and family demands. Over 70 employees have expressed interest in participating in the Forum.

A paid paternity leave was implemented by **Banc of America Securities** in San Francisco at the same time the company was developing their maternity leave policy. Any of the company's 2,300 employees who fulfill the 18 month employment requirement are eligible for two weeks paid paternity leave. This amount can be expanded to 14 weeks paid leave if the father is the primary caregiver. While new fathers are very grateful for the paid leave benefit (and many do take advantage of the two week paid leave), nobody has requested the 14 week leave since the policy was established in 1994.

**Bentley College** in Waltham, MA, encourages fathers to take advantage of the flexibility that is offered to all parents among its 990 employees. For example, many fathers use personal days and generous vacation allotments to attend their children's school activities and events throughout the year. Flexible schedules are also popular among fathers at all levels of the educational institution, particularly to accommodate child care schedules and school vacations. The College is clear with managers that men's requests for flexible schedules, time off or access to a Parent Support Group (attended by both moms and dads) should be considered the same as women's. For men who ask, the flexibility is available.

**Federal Express**, with 131,000 employees nationwide, allows employees to take their personal days in increments as small as one hour, which many fathers use to respond to their children's needs, including parent-teacher conferences and other family-related events. In addition, employees in the Customer Service area can set up flexible work schedules through schedule swapping. Fathers swap schedules so they can attend school events and other family activities. One of the company's northeast offices reported a high percentage of new fathers taking advantage of the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act including requesting anywhere from one week to one

month for the leave period. Some fathers request longer time periods but typically they are part-time employees who have another source of income. Employees have said that they would utilize FMLA more extensively if the company offered some sort of salary continuation program along with the leave.

While approximately 86% of its 1,800 employees are female, **Columbus Regional Hospital** in Columbus, IN, provides a host of inclusive benefits to both mothers and fathers, married and single. For example, fathers have access to guaranteed slots with contracted child care providers including full-time, back-up and drop-in care. Child care is subsidized based on income and fathers can receive paid time off for school events. The hospital offers sick child care onsite for mildly ill children.

Headquartered in Lowell, MA, **M/A-Com**, with 2,476 U.S. employees, helps soon-to-be fathers by offering access to a series of booklets and other educational materials designed to help them understand the process of pregnancy, what they can expect once the baby is born, and how to keep themselves and their baby healthy through exercise, healthy eating and not smoking. The company, which manufactures RF microwave and wireless communication products, also provides employees with lunchtime parenting seminars run by Employee Assistance Program representatives. The company also gives employees the ability to use paid time off for school events and other family-related needs through the use of PTO (personal time off).

---

## **RESEARCH OF INTEREST**

---

*From Jim Levine, Director of the Fatherhood Project at the Families and Work Institute and author of WORKING FATHERS: New Strategies for Balancing Work and Families, 1999.*

"It's really a marketing issue ... it's not that no men know about work-family policies. They think they're for women."

"Although many men are legally entitled to take family leave, the prevailing corporate culture at most companies doesn't encourage them to stay home with a new baby."

\* \* \*

*From Joseph Pleck, "Balancing Work and Family," Scientific American Presents, Summer 1999*

"My research in the 1970s, using self-report questionnaires, showed that family is far more psychologically central to men than work, just as is true for women. Other recent studies concur ... Other studies show that parenthood is associated with increased absences or lateness at work to a similar degree for men and women and that work-family disruptions, such as a breakdown in child-care arrangements, affect men's well-being at least as much as women's."

"Although men's changing work-family patterns are triggering demands for more flexible workplace policies, the changes are sure to be contested. In fact, considerable resistance to greater workplace flexibility exists today, despite the social attitudes favoring more involvement of fathers in family life."

\* \* \*

*From Ellen Galinsky, President of the Families and Work Institute and author of Ask the Children: What America's Children Really Think About Working Parents, 1999.*

"When we turn to children, we find that children 8 through 18 years old are more likely to feel that they have too little time with their employed fathers than with their employed mothers. We also find that fathers – more so than mothers – feel they have too little time with their child."

"...We find that older children are more likely than younger children to feel that they have too little time with their fathers. Asking the children helps us see that the hidden story about working parents and time is about fathers and teenagers."

\* \* \*