

BENCHMARKING SUMMARY: COVID-19 CRISIS FOR WORKING PARENTS

NOVEMBER 2020

COVID-19 has presented a dramatic challenge for working parents and caregivers. Women's careers, family stability, the economic recovery, and our efforts to make organizations more equitable and inclusive are all at risk. **We wanted to collect information from our members to evaluate how the COVID-19 crisis has impacted working parents, and especially working mothers, and what approaches these organization have taken or plan to take to mitigate these challenges.**

Please estimate the degree to which working parents are concerned about their ability to balance their jobs and responsibilities at home due to the COVID crisis. Please provide a rating from 1-5, with 5 being extremely concerned, and provide your insights on your estimate.

5 was the most common response from our members, with 4 being the lowest response. Members are quite concerned about parents working long and often unusual hours in order to assist with virtual learning and maintain their workloads. Members are concerned about the sustainability of this model as the pandemic continues to impact schools and child care centers for the foreseeable future.

Please rate the extent to which the COVID crisis may be disproportionately impacting working mothers more than working fathers in your organization and offer your observations on this issue.

There was more variation in these responses, with some saying they had heard both moms and dads were struggling, and others emphatic (with a rating of 5) that the crisis is disproportionately impacting mothers.

Please estimate the degree to which leadership feels this is an urgent issue at your organization. Please provide a rating from 1-5, with 5 being extremely urgent.

Leadership concern ranges from 3 to 5, with most members responding 5 - that their leaders recognize the urgency of the issue. Others report that leaders are more focused on other aspects of the business.

Please describe the segments of your workforce whom you consider to be at most risk in terms of engagement and retention (e.g. hourly employees, parents of young children, Black or Latina women, etc.).

Most at risk: Hourly workers, immigrant workers, black and brown populations (hit with the dual impacts of COVID and systemic racism), technical workers who can find employment elsewhere, manufacturing workers, call center employees.

The Boston College Workforce Roundtable is the premier learning and networking community for progressive employers who seek to provide a superior employee experience. Based in the Carroll School of Management at Boston College, the Roundtable combines the most valuable aspects of a professional community and the resources of a leading academic institution for members. The Roundtable offers interactive events, access to informational resources, and a robust community dedicated to sharing leading practices.

BENCHMARKING SUMMARY: COVID-19 SUPPORTS FOR WORKING PARENTS

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Briefly share what steps your organization has taken or plans to take to support your working parents, particularly mothers who now have increased responsibilities at home.

Flexibility

- Communication around all the flexibility options available
- On-going remote work (some through next June)
- Flexible start/stop times, Sunday work, night work
- Reduced schedule while maintaining full benefits (80%)
- Extended Caregiving Leave (partially or fully paid)
- Hybrid model- some days at home/some days at office
- Part-time work and job share options
- Compressed work week
- Sabbatical - encouraging use for caregiving reasons
- Leave bank - Vacation time or PTO donated by other employees

Well-being and Mental Health

- Promotion of existing EAP and counseling services
- Workshops and virtual events on resilience, stress, mindfulness and other wellbeing topics
- Telehealth services for physical and mental health
- Frequent pulse surveys and touch points
- Checking in and simply asking how employees are doing each week
- Wellness initiatives that offer services, tips, and hacks to reduce stress, balance home, family, getting enough rest
- Promoting appreciation, recognition, well-being and self-care activities, workshops, resources
- Assistance navigating the healthcare system
- Ergonomics support for remote working

Leadership and Culture

- Messages of understanding and validation from top leadership
- Regular town hall meetings or blogs from leaders to express support
- Transparency around return to work plans
- Review and enhance benefits to ensure they are inclusive of all employees and their caregiving needs
- Encourage authentic conversations and storytelling
- Reaffirming commitment to diversity, inclusion, and women's advancement
- Training for managers on empathy and support for caregivers during this crisis

Access to Care Support

- Access to Care.com or other caregiver platforms
- Back up child care in home or at center (paid or discounted)
- Elder care resources and support
- Support for children with special and unique needs
- Babysitting co-op where employee teens/older children can offer services to other parents with young children
- Virtual homework help – 24/7 access to online tutors for kindergarten through college (paid or discounted)
- Executive coaching and dual career couple coaching

Financial

- Subsidies for child care, tutoring, babysitters (some subsidies available to all, some based on income or hardship)
- Additional back up care days paid for by company
- Discounts on tutoring and enrichment programs
- Dependent Care FSA (COVID as critical incident allowing changes)
- Concierge Services

Community Support

- Intranet boards/social media groups for caregivers to connect with each other and share ideas and solutions
- Caregiver ERGs/business networks providing support and education
- Parent gatherings and virtual programming
- Women's groups programming to help connect with each other, find support, and reboot