

Paid Work and Care Work: Employed caregivers in the US

Donna L. Wagner, Ph.D.

Director of Gerontology

Towson University, Towson, MD



Family caregiving: It's everyone's business

- 60% of the family caregivers are employed (NAC/AARP, 2005).
- 15-20% of the workforce is involved in caring for a parent, an adult child, spouse or friend
- The majority of employees who are involved in care work must make some accommodations at work as a result.



Who are the employed caregivers?

- Men are nearly as likely as women in the workplace to report they are engaged in care work
- Younger workers (<35 years) are just as likely as older workers (>55 years) to be involved in care work
- Care work cuts across all socioeconomic groups and work sectors



The Care Situation

- Employed caregivers are involved in the same types of support as caregivers who are not employed
- Average duration of care work is 5 years
- Average number of hours per week – 8 hours per week
- Out of pocket expenses = >\$5,000 annually

Workplace Accommodations

- Arriving late/leaving early, missed days of work, lower “presenteeism” levels, taking unpaid leave, deferring promotions, travel and switching jobs.
- Effects of care work depends on care situation and characteristics of the employee
 - Younger caregivers may defer career development
 - Older caregivers leave the workforce
 - Long-distance caregivers miss entire days to care
 - Most “at risk” employed caregiver is co-resident with care recipient



The Cost of Care Work

- Time away from children and spouse
- Careers put on hold
- Lost lifetime earnings – effecting retirement income
- Out of pocket costs that might require use of savings, credit cards, deferred investments in home, personal expenses, spending on children



The Benefits of Care Work

- More fulfilling and rich relationship with care recipient
- Satisfaction that the work being done is important and meaningful to the family
- Rewards of reciprocity
- For many employed caregivers, working itself is a benefit – a respite and an environment over which employee has control

Employer Costs and Response

- Estimated \$33 billion in costs nationally on annual basis of employed caregivers to employers in lost time, reduced productivity, etc. (MetLife, 2006).
- Employer-based responses include
 - Policies – flexibility and support
 - Programs – Referral and information, decision-support programs



Federal Government's Response

- ❑ National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) – Research funds for specific employee-related innovations as well as state-specific programs
- ❑ Family and Medical Leave (1993) – unpaid job protection. 13% of users were caring for parent.
- ❑ GAO studies reveal details of employer-based programs and the aging network response
- ❑ Governmental agencies introduce programs for their own employees

Employer Responses (continued)

- 25% of large (>500) report some programs in place related to employee caregiving
- Many employers continue to have policies that do not permit employees to use their sick days for family illness
- Most employer-based eldercare is based on a child care model of resource and referral
- Decision support models like geriatric care managers have been shown to be effective in reducing perceived burden and increasing presenteeism (Wagner, 2006).



State Innovations

- California Paid Leave - 2004
 - First paid leave for family and personal medical needs
 - Funded by employees, not employers – Average \$27/annual
 - Covers up to 55% of the salary/wage of employee for up to six weeks



Needs of Employed Caregivers

- Paid family and medical leave
- Recognition of their importance to the long term care system by medical professionals, service professionals and the tax code.
- Paid sick leave that can be used for family care
- Better access to services and information