



## Family Friendly Business Practices

Today, people work longer hours with more demands.<sup>1</sup> Workplace demands put more stress on workers as they try to balance their work lives with their home lives.<sup>2</sup> This has led to reports of higher financial stress, as well as greater work-life conflict.<sup>3</sup> More attention is being paid to the toll these demands and pressures can take on workers and their families.

Family Friendly Business Practices are options companies can give their workers that let them create a schedule that best fits workers' needs and helps reduce the stress of balancing work and life. The most common are:

**Flexible scheduling or allowing for a less strict work day**  
(i.e., not a 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. shift).<sup>4</sup>

**Telecommuting or letting people work outside of their office.**<sup>5</sup>

**Childcare Benefits**  
(on-site, near-site, subsidized childcare) or letting workers plan around their children, which can include on-site childcare, near-site childcare, childcare subsidies, or any combination of the three.<sup>6</sup>

Many businesses today see the value of offering family-friendly practices that help to support their workers in raising their children and caring for their aging relatives. Reducing employee stress can help employees be healthier overall and make them more productive when they are at work.<sup>7</sup>

## Family Friendly Business Practices and Health

Today's workers face more demands on their time from all directions, forcing them to constantly balance their attention between work and their personal lives.<sup>8</sup> This stress can have a harmful impact, as long periods of stress have been shown to cause poor mental health and can negatively affect physical health too. Stress can lead to feelings of worry and sadness, while also upsetting sleep and creating a tense work environment.<sup>9,10</sup> Stress has also been linked to weight gain, obesity, higher blood pressure, and putting more strain on a person's heart.<sup>11</sup> Family friendly business practices are a way for businesses to decrease the impact of stress on their workers by helping to create a more integrated work-life experience. Flexible work schedules and telecommuting policies reduce employee stress by giving workers more time with friends and families, as well as greater flexibility for personal needs, such as scheduling doctor appointments.<sup>12</sup> Employer-sponsored childcare can encourage positive parenting activities (i.e., breastfeeding) and has been shown to reduce stress and have real health benefits for mother and child.<sup>13</sup> By allowing for more worker control, family friendly business practices can directly impact both stress-related physical and mental health issues.<sup>14</sup>

## Return on Investment for Family Friendly Business Practices

Family friendly business practices give workers more control over their time and creates company loyalty.<sup>15</sup> Having dedicated and healthy workers also helps companies by lowering the cost of losing workers and missed work days.<sup>16,17</sup> In fact, a 2016 study found that the cost of losing an employee can range from tens of thousands of dollars to nearly two-times the employee's annual salary.<sup>18</sup> Overall, giving workers more control over their time through family friendly business practices does not hurt company success, and in fact, can make workers happier, more engaged, and less likely to leave.

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Mishel, "Vast Majority of Wage Earners are Working Harder, and for Not Much More: Trends in U.S. Work Hours and Wages over 1979-2007," Economic Policy Institute 348(2013), <http://www.epi.org/publication/ib348-trends-us-work-hours-wages-1979-2007/>

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca J. Rosen, "Money-Rich and Time-Poor: Life in Two-Income Households," *The Atlantic*, November 4, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/11/work-life-balance-pew-report/414028/>

<sup>3</sup> Kim Parker and Eileen Patton, "The Sandwich Generation: Rising Financial Burdens for Middle-Aged Americans," Pew Research Center, January 30, 2013, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/01/30/the-sandwich-generation/>

<sup>4</sup> "Flexible Work Arrangements: A Discussion Paper," Employment and Social Development Canada, May 2016

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Anne Weisberg and Ellen Galinsky, "Family Matters: The Business Case for Investing in the Transition to Parenthood," Families and Work Institute, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Erin Kelly and Phyllis Moen, "Rethinking the Clockwork of Work: Why Schedule Control May Pay off at Work and at Home," *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 9:4(2007), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4295783/>

<sup>8</sup> Rebecca J. Rosen, "Money-Rich and Time-Poor: Life in Two-Income Households," *The Atlantic*, November 4, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/11/work-life-balance-pew-report/414028/>

<sup>9</sup> Jens Bonde, "Psychological Factors at Work and Risk of Depression: A Systematic Review of the Epidemiological Evidence," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 65(2007), doi: 10.1136/oem.2007.038430

<sup>10</sup> Ulf Lundberg, "Stress Hormones in Health and Illness: The Roles of Work and Gender," *Journal of Psychoneuroendocrinology* 30 (2005), doi: 10.1016/j.psyneuen.2005.03.014

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Swanber, et al., "Schedule control, Supervisor Support and Work Engagement: A Winning Combination for Workers in Hourly Jobs?" *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 79 (2011)

<sup>13</sup> Kate Hodal, "Breastfeeding Could Prevent 800,000 Child Deaths, Lancet Says," *The Guardian*, January 28, 2016

<sup>14</sup> Kerry Joyce, Roman Pabayo, Julia Critchley, and Clare Bamba, "Flexible Working Conditions and their Effects on Employee Health and Wellbeing," *Cochrane Public Health Group*, February 17, 2010, doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD008009.pub2

<sup>15</sup> Phyllis Hope and Fred J. Rayworth, "Meeting Employee's Needs Through On-Site Child Care," *Health Manpower Management* 18.3 (1992): 15

<sup>16</sup> Jack Altman, "How Much Does Employee Turnover Really Cost?" *The Huffington Post*, January 19, 2017, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-much-does-employee-turnover-really-cost\\_us\\_587fba9e4b0474ad-4874fb7](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-much-does-employee-turnover-really-cost_us_587fba9e4b0474ad-4874fb7)

<sup>17</sup> "Absenteeism: The Bottom-Line Killer," *Circadian Information Limited Partnership*, Lexington, MA: 2005

<sup>18</sup> Jack Altman, "How Much Does Employee Turnover Really Cost?" *The Huffington Post*, January 19, 2017, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-much-does-employee-turnover-really-cost\\_us\\_587fba9e4b0474ad-4874fb7](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-much-does-employee-turnover-really-cost_us_587fba9e4b0474ad-4874fb7)



## State of Family Friendly Business Practices in Colorado

In Colorado, EPIC (Executives Partnering to Invest in Children), Colorado Essentials for Childhood, and Health Links have come together to lead the charge for more family friendly businesses. They recently created a “Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit” and “Family-Friendly Workplace Assessment” (see table below) to help businesses become more family friendly.<sup>19</sup> The assessment helps get businesses involved by giving them family-friendly scores and access to resources and training. Their goal is to create supportive and successful companies, along with a stronger market throughout Colorado that supports its workers.

## Colorado Spotlight: Family Friendly Companies

These companies meet the Family Friendly Workplace Toolkit criteria of a Family Friendly Business, which are:

- + **Flexible Work Hours**
- + **Core Benefits**  
(ex. health insurance, retirement savings plan)
- + **Paid Leave**  
(ex. maternity leave, sick leave)
- + **Support Services**  
(ex. access to counseling)
- + **Career Development**  
(ex. access to additional job training)
- + **Community Involvement**  
(ex. volunteering)

**Boulder County**  
offers paid leave, and an “infants-at-work” policy

**Children’s Hospital Colorado**  
offers an employee assistance program (EAP) and a Backup Care program

**DaVita, Inc**  
offers employees flexible work schedules, support services, and financial support for employees in need

**Pinnacle Assurance**  
has a paid time off bank instead of separating out earned time-off, flexible work schedules, and core benefits

**USAA**  
offers workers flexible schedules, telecommuting options, and a wellness program

<sup>19</sup> David Shapio and Giorgianna Venetis, “Supporting Family-Friendly Employers in Colorado,” Early Childhood Colorado Partnership, November 28, 2016, <http://eccp.civiccanopy.org/supporting-family-friendly-employers-colorado/>