

Employer-Supported Child Care

Why should employers be concerned?

There has been a significant increase in the number of working parents and women in the workforce.

The proportion of Canadian families with two parents working on a full-time, full-year basis had more than doubled from 15% in 1980 to 32% in 2005. In 2006, 73% of New Brunswick women whose youngest child was under age 6 were employed.

Source: Statistics Canada

Often the demands of work spill over into family life and vice versa and many working parents are seeking solutions to juggle these demands. Employers can help by providing family-friendly initiatives.

Whether direct or indirect, employer-supported child care is a family-friendly initiative that can help employees with dependents better manage their work-life balance, and help position the employer as an 'employer of choice'.

Child care breakdowns leading to employee absences cost businesses \$3 billion annually in the United States.

Source: "Child Care & Parent Productivity: Making the Business Case", Cornell University, Dec. 2004.

Employers who provide employer-supported child care have reported a number of benefits including:

- Enhanced recruitment and retention of employees
- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduced employee stress and increased employee wellness
- Increased productivity
- Improved employee morale and loyalty

How family-friendly is your workplace?

Find out how supportive your workplace is to your employees' child care needs.

- Does your organization encourage time off work to care for children for illness or emergency?
- Does your organization encourage employees to take advantage of family-friendly benefits that suit their needs?
- Does your organization offer direct child care subsidies such as assistance with child care expenses or provide child care vouchers?

- Does your organization provide employees with an on-site or near-site daycare?
- Does management support family responsibilities through "leading by example"?

If you've answered 'no' to all or most of the above questions, consider employer-supported child care as a business strategy to enhance your company's competitive edge.

"Bright Beginnings daycare has been a source of pride for NB Power and its employees. This service offered to employees has allowed NB Power to distinguish itself as an employer of choice and has been recognized for its efforts. In fact, the on-site daycare at NB Power's head office was a contributor to NB Power being recognized as one of Canada's Top 100 employers for three consecutive years."

- NB Power

Employer-supported child care options

Providing information

- Parent seminars
- Web-based child care resources
- Child care resource and referral services

Adopting flexible work hours and leave policies

- Alternative work schedules
- Parental leave policies

Providing financial assistance

- Dependent care assistance
- Voucher or reimbursement systems
- Employer-purchased child care space / Discount programs

Creating or supporting child care services

- School-age child care
- Sick-child care
- Shared, employer-sponsored child care facilities
- Dedicated, employer-sponsored child care facilities

Source: Illinois Child Care: Options for Employers

Options for backup child care include:

- Regular centres with backup capabilities
- Specialized backup child-care centres
- Drop-in care
- In-home emergency care

Source: John Marvin and Nora Spinks, Canadian HR Reporter, Published Nov.8, 2004, "Backup child care: Canada's new employee benefit".

CIBC Children's Center - Toronto

After experiencing back-up care at its offices in New York, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) partnered with ChildrenFirst to bring back-up care to CIBC's world headquarters in 2002.

In its first year of service offering back-up care to over 800 families, the CIBC Children's Centre saved CIBC 2500 work days, with a productivity savings of 1.2 million dollars. In its fourth year of service, with over 6,700 work days saved since opening, the CIBC Children's Centre offers back-up solutions to more than 2000 CIBC families.

Source: Excerpt from Bright Horizons

Employer-supported child care makes good business sense.

When employees can be at work without feeling stressed or guilty about their family obligations, they will be more focused and engaged at work and less likely to be absent due to child care duties. This can result in enhanced productivity, employee satisfaction and cost savings for employers.

In an increasingly competitive labour market, progressive employers are responding to employees' child care needs by providing employer-supported child care options.

Tips for getting started

- **Conduct an employee survey.** Every workplace is different. Get your employees' input so you can implement employer-supported child care options that meet the interests and needs of your employees.
- **Educate management and employees.** Ensure everyone understands the benefits and value for employer-supported child care. Hold staff meetings to discuss and respond to any questions. Set clear guidelines and policies.
- **Start with a pilot or test trial.** Testing out an employer-supported child care option is an opportunity for both employers and employees to determine its effectiveness. During this time, you can evaluate absenteeism, turnover, productivity, etc.

Be informed.

Learn more about employer-supported child care options and find out what other employers are doing.

- Visit our website www.gnb.ca/wagegap
- Call toll-free **1-877-253-0266**
- Email nbwagegap@gnb.ca