



Family friendly workplaces

Work life balance fact sheet 7

What are family friendly workplaces?

Many employees, both female and male, have family and child care responsibilities. Family friendly workplaces make provisions that enable these employees to meet both their family and work commitments.

Benefits of family friendly workplaces

Family friendly workplaces make good business sense because they help to:

- attract and retain employees;
- reduce sick leave and absenteeism;
- increase staff morale, commitment and productivity; and
- promote a positive public image.

How to make workplaces family friendly

There are a number of policies and practices that can be put in place to help employees balance their work and family responsibilities. Some examples are described below.

Flexible work

Flexible rosters, variable start/finish times and flexible leave options enable employees to adjust their working hours and times so that they can meet family responsibilities.

Part time work and job sharing

Many women with young children prefer to work part time, by either reducing the hours worked per day or working fewer days per week. Where a job needs to be done on a full time basis, it can be shared by two part time employees.

Home based work

Working from home can be arranged on a short term basis to enable an employee to care for a sick child or family member, or on a long term basis to meet regular caring responsibilities.

Relocation

An employer with several outlets or offices may consider relocating an employee with family responsibilities to a workplace closer to home.

Telephone access

Providing employees with access to a work telephone for family related matters reduces stress and anxiety, increases work concentration and enables employees to remain at work.

Parental Leave

Some employers have introduced paid parental leave as an additional employee benefit. The period of leave is determined by the employer based on business and employee needs and usually covers both mothers and fathers/partners. In addition, the Commonwealth Government has introduced a paid parental leave pay scheme (18 weeks of pay at the national minimum wage).

Assisting with childcare

Employers can reserve places in day care, after school and vacation care at a negotiated fee, which is then paid by the employee. This arrangement works best if the childcare centre is close to the workplace and therefore readily accessible to employees before, during and after work.

Some employers decide to fully or partially subsidise the cost of childcare or eldercare. Consult an accountant or the Australian Taxation Office to clarify the Fringe Benefits Tax implications.

Larger employers could consider establishing a childcare centre at the workplace. Another option is a joint venture with other businesses, the local council or community groups.

Workplace family room

A workplace family room enables employees to continue working productively while minding a child or another dependent family member when normal care arrangements break down. This could assist employees with childcare emergencies, sick dependents or pupil-free days.

Scheduling training courses and meetings

Wherever possible avoid scheduling training courses and meetings to start early or finish late, or during school holidays. For live-in events, make arrangements for employees with family responsibilities to go home if necessary.

Legal responsibilities of employers

Both State and federal industrial legislation provide minimum conditions for paid carer's leave and unpaid parental leave. Individual awards and agreements may provide additional entitlements.

Under the Western Australian *Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1984* (WA) it is unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their caring responsibilities or family status.

Where to go for more information

Further information about work life balance strategies is available from the Department of Commerce work life website www.worklife.wa.gov.au. Information about part-time work and parental leave is available from www.commerce.wa.gov.au/LabourRelations.

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