

Engaging Employers in the Caregiving Crisis:

How Supporting Employees Results in Return on Investment

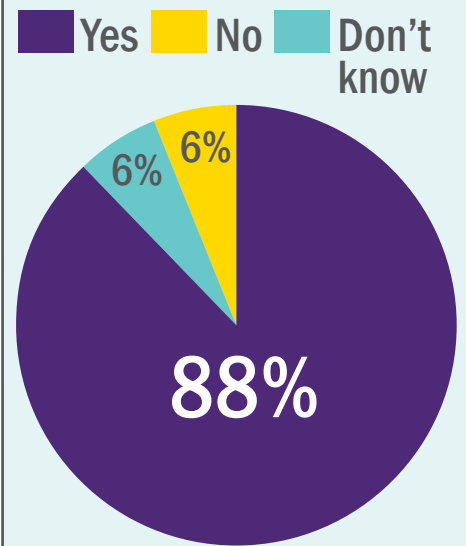
Wisconsin's Caregiving Dilemma

Wisconsin employers are facing a dilemma: as the state's population ages, more employees will be taking on caregiving responsibilities at home. National trends augment this concern with the National Business Group on Health reporting that 88 percent of employers identify caregiving as an increasingly important issue in the next five years.¹

In fact, while Wisconsin's population of adults over the age of 65 is projected to grow 72 percent between 2015 and 2040, the pool of people in their prime caregiving years is shrinking. Those looking for paid help are already having a difficult time recruiting workers due to the state's low unemployment rate and stagnant wages. A 2018 Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis Report estimated 16,500 vacant caregiver positions in Wisconsin long-term and residential care facilities. That forces family members to take on major caregiving responsibilities at home, and an estimated 56 percent of those caregivers keep working full time. Pew Research recently reported that 42% of Gen Xers are already "sandwich generation" caregivers supporting both young children and aging parents.² This beats out baby boomers, 33% of whom are reported caregivers.

Caregiving responsibilities for a family member or friend are diverse and complicated. From navigating support systems and doctor appointments to providing direct cares and managing daily medications, family caregivers experience significant stress. So much so that their own health and work productivity may suffer if an employer doesn't take notice.

Employers say caregiving will be important issue in the next five years



The Annual Cost of Employee Caregivers

↓ \$33 Billion
loss to lower productivity



↓ \$6.6 Billion
loss to early retirement or exit



↑ \$13.4 Billion
spent in health care costs



Employer Impact and Response

Surveys and research indicate that employers have been slow to respond to the caregiving crisis, even though retention of experienced workers and support of caregivers can save businesses money. According to AARP and the Family Caregiver Alliance, employee caregiving costs employers \$33 billion annually from lost productivity and an additional \$6.6 billion to replace employees who retired early or quit. Due to stress and neglect of their own health, unsupported caregiver employees are also estimated to cost \$13.4 billion more per year in health care than their co-workers without such responsibilities.³

In a 2018 Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance survey of more than 200 Wisconsin employers, nearly three-quarters indicated that the caregiving responsibilities of their employees was causing increased stress for both employees and supervisors on the job. Forty-four percent of respondents indicated their employees were caregivers outside of work. Still, Wisconsin employer strategies were limited and mirrored national surveys showing that unpaid family leave and flexible schedules were the current go-to strategies.

Employer Return on Investment:

Investing in **flextime** and **telecommuting programs** = between **\$1.70** and **\$4.45** saved for every dollar spent.



What Caregivers Want

Caregiving employees tell us they are looking for more from their employer than unpaid FLMA. Many are even factoring employer policies into their job search. According to the National Business Group on Health, 89% of employees say an employer's paid family leave policies are very or somewhat important when considering an employment opportunity, and that number is greater for millennials at 95%.⁴

According to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), employees say they need and are seeking a variety of supports including:

- The ability to talk freely with management about their struggle to balance work and caregiving. (A 2015 National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP report showed that just over half of caregivers told their supervisor about their responsibilities at home.)
- Flextime and telecommuting options.
- Support groups and creative on-site or online options. Kimberly Clark's Family Caregiver Network is one highly regarded Wisconsin example.⁵

Other caregiver surveys show a desire for expanded paid leave policies like those offered by Wisconsin bio-tech manufacturer, Promega. In 2018 the company allowed those caring for aging parents, ill spouses and children with medical needs to benefit from paid time off without sacrificing their own paid sick or vacation time. In 2018, a small but growing number of employers (10 of 70 companies surveyed by the advocacy group PL+US) had expanded paid leave policies.⁶

“The company believes that offering paid leave for employees who need it – **over and above parental leave** – will reduce stress, improve productivity and result in a **healthier and happier workforce.**”

Promega Benefits Manager,
Diana Clark

Investing in flextime and telecommuting programs alone can result in a tangible return on investment calculated at between \$1.70 and \$4.45 for every dollar spent.⁷

Next Steps in Wisconsin

Caregiving has become a priority issue in Wisconsin for these reasons and it is also receiving attention in the state's Legislature and Governor's office. In 2016 the Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia issued a report resulting in increased funds for respite care, training and crisis supports. In 2019 Governor Evers issued an Executive Order creating the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving with a charge, in part, to address the needs of working family caregivers and the businesses that employ them, and to find solutions to the state's growing caregiving workforce shortage.

Employers should take notice and be part of the conversation about solutions.

Employers can find support through the help of free resources provided by public and nonprofit agencies throughout Wisconsin. Specifically, Wisconsin's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) network can be a place to start: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc



¹ 2018 National Business Group on Health Quick Survey.

² Snelling, S.; Forbes: "Caregiving is a Corporate Issue; April 2014.

³ MetLife Mature Market Group, National Alliance for Caregiving; the University Pittsburgh Institute on Aging; 2010.

⁴ 2018 National Business Group on Health

⁵ http://capricorn.bc.edu/agingandwork/database81/browse/case_study/25117

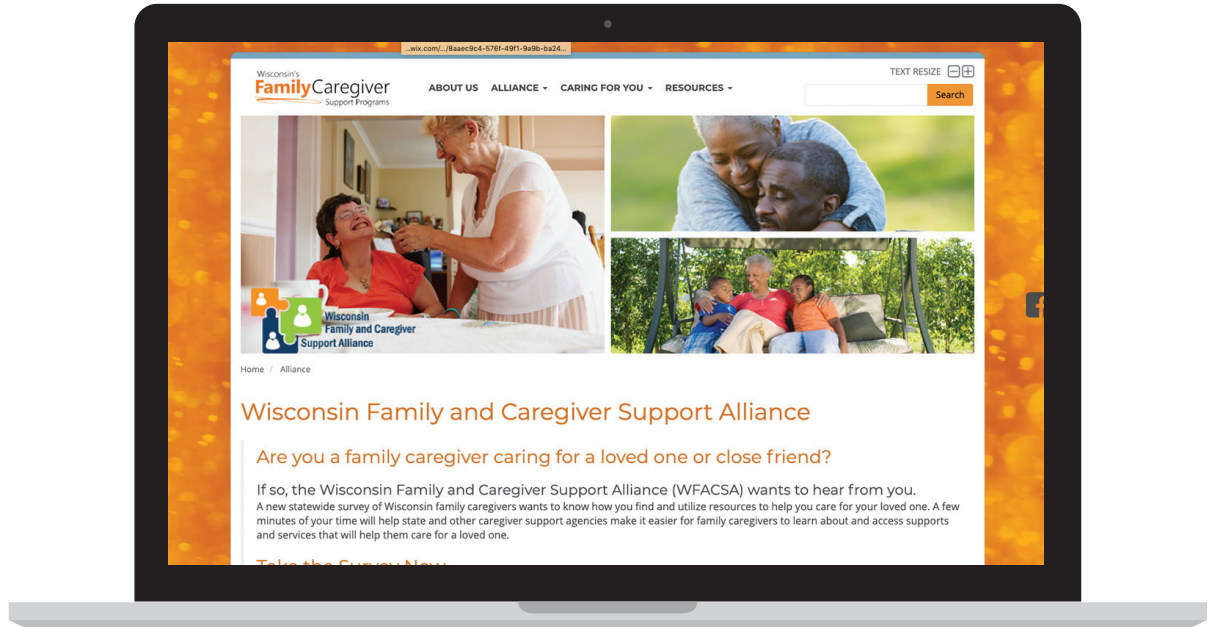
⁶ PL+US 2018 Employer Scorecard <https://paidleave.us/topemployerpolicies>

⁷ AARP; ReACT; Determining the Return on Investment: Supportive Policies for Employee Caregivers; 2016.

Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance

The Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) is an alliance of disability and aging organizations and other allies that are working to address the needs of families who provide care. We do this by promoting partnerships that improve resource coordination and increase access to supports that will sustain families and businesses into the future.

Connect with WFACSA at <http://wisconsin caregiver.org/alliance>



For More information contact the Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance at wfacsa@gmail.com