



Balancing Work & Family Responsibilities:

Parent Support Provider Training

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Balancing Work & Family Responsibilities





Agenda

- Introductions
- Use of the manual
- Why we are here
- Knowledge building
- Skill building
- Action plan development



Balancing Work & Family Responsibilities



As Parent Support Providers, you have walked in the shoes of employed parents of children with disabilities.



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session you will be able to:

- 1) Identify the prevalence of children/youth with disabilities, and the challenges faced by the parents who care for them.
- 2) Identify federal policies and employment strategies that may increase work-life integration of employees.
- 3) Recognize and discuss major organizational dilemmas facing HR (and supervisors) when employed parents of children/youth ask for flexibility.
- 4) Describe and carry out planning and communication strategies that employed parents of children/youth with disabilities can use to access workplace support.

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Definitions and Prevalence

- Terms used: *disabilities, special needs, special health care needs.*
- Various categories: e.g., physical, mental health, developmental.
- Chronic conditions with acute episodes.
- Rates of occurrence vary by definition used for data collection.
- Rates of employees parenting children/youth with disabilities.



Prevalence

23% of all households have children/
youth with special health care needs.





Prevalence

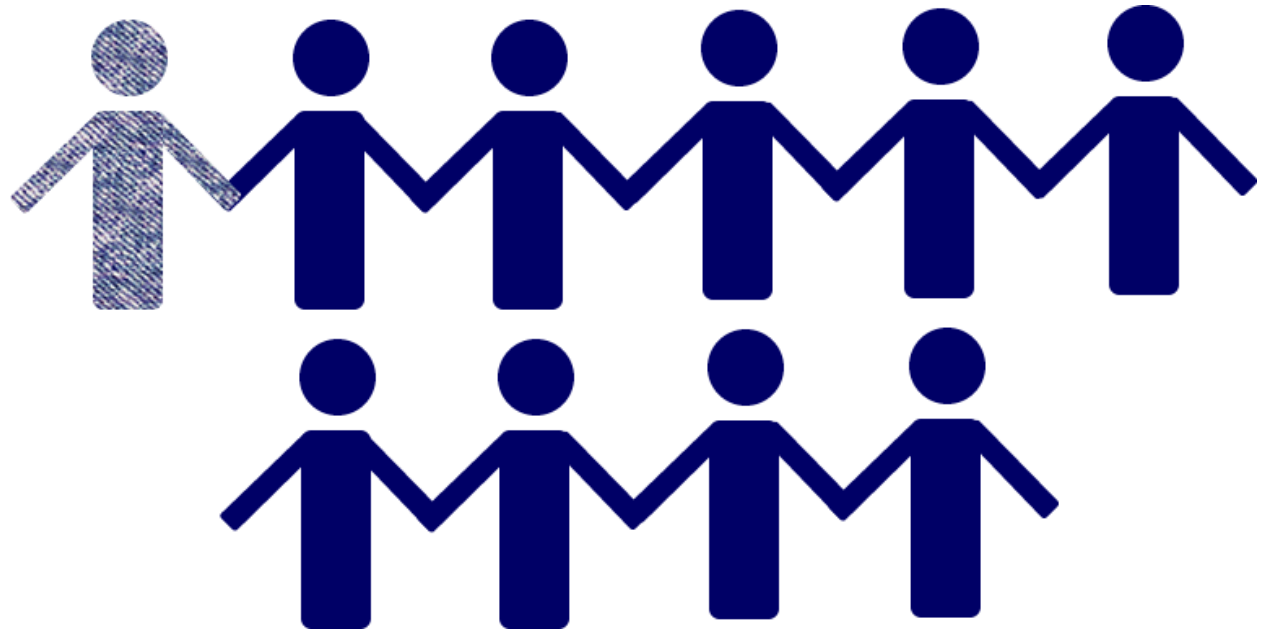
Public health crisis: only 1 in 5 children/
youth receive needed mental health care.





Prevalence

9% of employees are parents of children/
youth with disabilities.





Checkpoint: What Can I do?

- Module 1: Definition/Terminology
 - Use terms relating to disability appropriately, and with “person first” language.
 - Learn more about the chronic/acute presentation of a specific disability that affects children/youth, e.g., autism, asthma.
 - Distribute information on prevalence rates to other parents and employers.



Knowledge Check

Which term is used for conditions of children/youth who qualify for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

- A. Chronic illness
- B. Acute illness
- C. Special needs
- D. Medical impairment



Knowledge Debrief

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Knowledge Check

Which of the following is an example of the use of “person first” language?

- A. Bipolar adolescent
- B. Boy with asthma
- C. Diabetic girl
- D. Paraplegic



Knowledge Debrief

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Exceptional Caregiving Responsibilities

- Tasks and activities more complex & extensive than typical caregiving.
- Requires coordination with many community-based resources.
- Can lead to caregiver strain affecting health & well-being of employee.

Care Responsibilities: Typical Development & Disabilities



EXCEPTIONAL CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES¹⁴ (ROUNDTREE AND LYNCH, 2006)

Caring for a child/youth with typical development	Caring for a child/youth with special needs/disabilities
Constant care that diminishes	Constant care that often escalates
Ordinary input of time and energy	Extraordinary input of time and energy
Easier as time goes by	Often harder as time goes by
Few interruptions are emergency-driven	Many interruptions are emergency-driven
Child/youth grows increasingly independent	Child/youth may grow increasingly dependent
Requires some lifestyle adjustments	Requires numerous lifestyle adjustments
Challenges and successes are easily shared	Challenges are rarely shared; successes are fewer



Exceptional Caregiving Responsibilities

- Parents of children/youth with disabilities engage in care tasks that are more complex and extensive than other parents.
- Exceptional caregiving requires coordination with multiple community-based supports.
- Parents involved in exceptional caregiving may experience caregiver strain which can have negative health effects.

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Employee Work-Life Integration Challenges

- Child care
- Managing child/youth care appointments and crises
- Building a career/upward job mobility
- Experiencing courtesy stigmatization
- Disclosure decisions about child/youth disability



Work-Family Challenges

23.8% of U. S. families raising a child with special health care needs have a member who quit or reduced hours because of exceptional care responsibilities.





Child Care Challenges



Children with mental health problems are 20 times more likely to be dismissed from child care than typically developing children.



Employed Parents' Focus Groups

I would get calls from the day care. 'I quit. I can't handle him'. I was like, 'I have two more hours. Could you just hold on for two more hours?'

If I don't keep him on medication and keep the check-ups regular and stuff, things will get progressively worse. That will be the point where it is a complete necessity. I can't be at work for a week.

It is not a result of poor parenting or character deficits, or that you feed your kid too much of this food...you don't need people's judgment on you...suddenly there's something wrong with you because you have a child with a diagnosis.



Knowledge Check

Which of the following is **generally true** for parents who are caring for children with disabilities but **not true** for parents whose children are developing typically?

- A. Requires lifestyle adjustment.
- B. Challenges and successes are shared with co-workers.
- C. Few work-day interruptions are emergency driven
- D. As children become older, parenting demands become more intense and time consuming.



Knowledge Debrief

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Knowledge Check

Which statement **best** describes child care for children with disabilities?

- A. Child care centers are required to enroll all children with disabilities.
- B. Child care is often provided by parents scheduling work shifts that do not overlap.
- C. Parents of children with disabilities report their children's child care is satisfactory and of high quality.
- D. Affordable child care is easy to find for children with disabilities.



Knowledge Debrief

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Checkpoint: What Can I Do?

- **Module 2: Exceptional Caregiving Responsibilities**
 - Identify community-based resources for employed parents with ECRs; compile resource file.
 - Assist parents as they make long-term career decisions.
- **Module 3: WL Integration Challenges**
 - Listen for comments that reflect stigmatization & courtesy stigmatization; educate as needed.
 - With employed parents review their company's policies and practices regarding time-off for child's doctor appointments and handling crises.

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Key Policies and Legal Issues

- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- American with Disabilities Act (ADA),
Association Provision.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education
Act (IDEA).
- Family Responsibilities Discrimination.



Knowledge Check

Which one of the following supports is ensured by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

- A. Salary paid to an employee while taking time off to care for her child who has cancer.
- B. Job protection for a grandmother who takes FMLA to care for a granddaughter experiencing a mental health crisis.
- C. Guaranteed right to return to the same, or an equivalent position after the conclusion of a father's leave to care for his son with an acute health crisis.
- D. Job protection for a part-time worker who is caring for a child who is recovering from an accident.



Knowledge Debrief

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Parent Story: Charlie

- Charlie
 - 10 year employee.
 - FT Administrative Assistant.
 - Supervisor expressed concerns to him about his frequent family-related phone calls, leaving the office to care for daughter with asthma. His wife cannot shift her work schedule or take calls.
 - Wants to request time off to stabilize daughter's health, move to PT.
- What major work-life integration challenges does Charlie face?
- What are some of the federal policies that might apply when talking with Charlie about his request?

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Employment-based Strategies and Supports

- Find a family-friendly workplace.
- Learn about rights and relevant benefits.
- Structure work to maximize flexibility.
- Make a disclosure plan.
- Negotiate reciprocity.

A graphic in the top left corner consists of a white speech bubble containing a 2x3 grid of six hands. Each hand is a different color: purple, green, pink, orange, blue, and yellow.

Employed Parents' Focus Groups

The strategy that I now have is to find an employer who is family-friendly. I work for an airline and it provides me with great flexibility. I am able to trade shifts with other people to accommodate my needs.

If I have a headache or I am sick, I just write it off as sick time, but if it is something wrong with my child, then I write it down as FMLA. It is nice because I don't have to use the whole 12 weeks a year, but I probably use at least half. To me, it is a safeguard.



Possible Outcomes of Disclosure Decisions

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF THE DISCLOSURE DECISIONS³⁹

	Positive	Negative
Disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access formal supports • Flexible work arrangements • Increase informal supports • Educate others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courtesy stigmatization • Equity concerns • Performance scrutiny • Co-worker resentment • Job insecurity/loss
Concealment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid courtesy stigmatization • Avoid equity concerns • Avoid performance scrutiny • Avoid co-worker resentment • Escape worries from home • Maintain a "normal appearing" work life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminished access to formal supports • Diminished flexible work arrangements • Diminished informal support • Isolation

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Understanding HR Professionals' Support Dilemmas

- Balancing the work-life needs of the employed parent of child/youth with business goals.
- Having too much information vs. not enough to provide support.
- Minimizing potential litigation with maximizing flexibility and support.

A graphic icon consisting of six stylized hands in various colors (purple, green, pink, orange, blue, yellow) arranged in a 2x3 grid, enclosed in a white oval with a black border.

HR Professionals' Focus Groups

If you allow one employee to do a certain flexibility on issues and then say no to another, that brings up a whole other situation of equity that you might have to speak to, or you might be breaking the work rules and whatnot. There are just tons of factors, like everything else in human resources.

It is such a litigious environment. You really have to watch your Ps and Qs because just the slightest thing can set someone off...You have to be absolutely careful every step of the way. Otherwise you are opening yourself up to an enormous potential lawsuit.



Checkpoint: What Can I Do?

- **Module 5: Employment Strategies and Supports**
 - Work with parents who are seeking employment to identify a family-friendly employer.
 - Discuss ways to obtain flexible work arrangements with employed parents.
- **Module 6: Understanding HR Support Dilemmas**
 - Review the roles and responsibilities of HR professionals with employed parents.

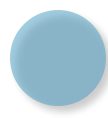
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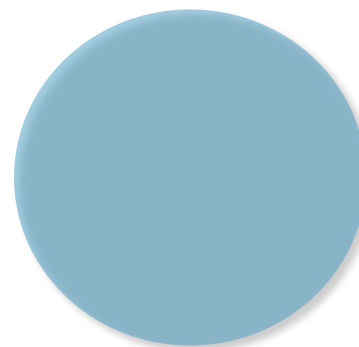
Accessing Workplace Support

- Identifying Resources for Support:
 - Inventory
 - Access plan
- Disclosure planning:
 - When?
 - Who?
 - What?
- Communication Strategies:
 - Speak to organizational concerns
 - Partner for solutions
 - Re-connect, re-evaluate, re-commit



Accessing Workplace Support

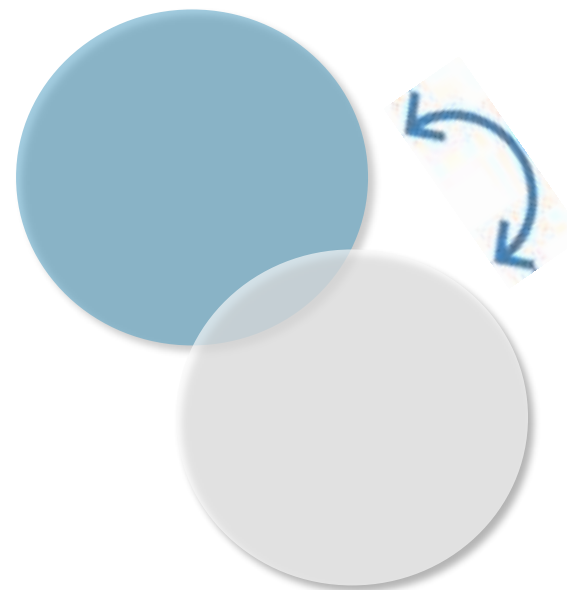
 *Inventory of Supportive Resources*





Accessing Workplace Support

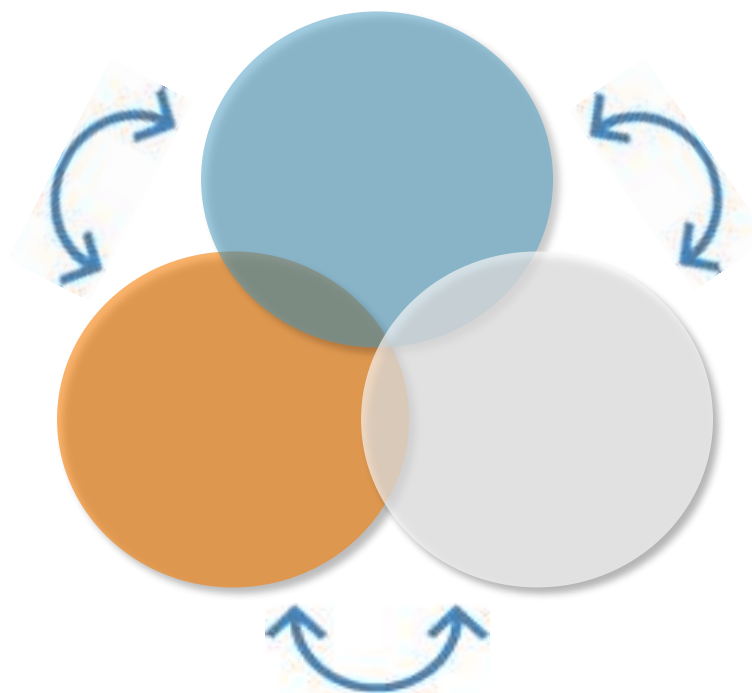
-  *Inventory of Supportive Resources*
-  *Disclosure Planning*





Accessing Workplace Support

-  *Inventory of Supportive Resources*
-  *Disclosure Planning*
-  *Communication Strategies*





Inventory of Supportive Resources

- **Flexible Work Arrangements**
 - Variable scheduling
 - Work from home
 - Swap with co-workers
 - Part-time options
 - Temporary work reduction
 - Handbook information on how to request, negotiate
- **Leave Policies**
 - Paid leave provided
 - Unpaid leave provided
 - Sick leave
 - Flexible use of leave
 - FMLA
- **Time-off Policies**
 - Child's medical appts.
 - Child's IEP or school appts.
 - Care coordination
 - Child crisis
 - Co-workers' donated time
- **Child Care**
 - Onsite child care/trained
 - Subsidized R&R
 - Child care subsidies
 - Flexible spending accounts
 - Child can come to work
- **Health Benefits**
 - Comprehensive coverage for FT, PT
 - Wellness, dental, vision, MH
 - Choice of plans



Inventory of Supportive Resources

- **People**

- Supportive supervisor
- Supportive co-workers
- Knowledgeable and supportive HR
- Notified quickly about child emergency
- Affinity or support groups, networks for employees w/child/youth disabilities.

- **Other**

- Can take & make personal, child related calls
 - Workshops, seminars on children/youth with disabilities
 - Disability information on company internet
- **Your Ideas?**



Disclosure Planning

- **Conversation Starters**
 - Could you tell me your experiences when sharing information about your child's disability?
 - What are your thoughts, feelings about sharing information with others at your workplace?
 - Who, if anyone, have you told that your child has (condition)?
- **Disclosure Planning**
 - When?
 - With whom?
 - What type of information?



Collaborative Communication

- Communication about family matters is:
 - *Personal*
 - *Relational*
 - *Informational*
 - *Collaborative*
- Three skill areas to enhance
 - *Speak to organizational concerns*
e.g. “Here’s how I will continue to communicate with my supervisor and co-workers if I sometimes work from home.”
 - *Partner for solutions*
e.g. “Here are some ways I have successfully problem-solved my work-family challenges in the past”.
 - *Re-connect, re-evaluate, & re-commit*
e.g. “Can we meet in two weeks to review which strategies are working and where I might need additional support?”



Parent Story: Susan

- Susan
 - 8 year employee; FT accountant
 - Referred to HR by her supervisor, Joe because of missed deadlines, negative calls from clients, and trouble at home.
 - Recently divorced, now a single parent of a son who has mental health and substance abuse difficulties
 - Discussion: how to make Susan's work-life situation more manageable.
- *What would you suggest Susan discuss with Joe?*
- *How will you help her prepare before she meets with HR?*
- How can developing the three skill areas discussed in this Module 7 help Susan get the workplace supports she needs?

Questions?



Balancing Work & Family Responsibilities:

Parent Support Provider Training

Thank You

