



CAREGIVERS IN THE WORKPLACE

A Guide for Employers

**Building a resilient and
sustainable workforce**



THE ONTARIO

caregiver
ORGANIZATION

CAREGIVERS
IN THE WORKPLACE

Caregivers make up 35% of the Canadian workforce. Across Ontario alone, there are **3.3 million caregivers**. These are ordinary people who are caring for family members, partners, friends and neighbours who have physical and/or mental health needs. These needs go beyond typical care responsibilities, as they are in response to an illness or condition requiring additional support. While many find the role fulfilling, the added responsibility of providing care often impacts the physical and mental health of caregivers themselves.

As we reach the ‘verge of crisis’ for care, employees will be taking on caregiving roles more than ever before. This growing workplace issue will be affected by changing demographic factors including the ageing of baby boomers and increased prevalence of older Canadians living with chronic conditions, functional impairments and dementia. 50% of caregiving employees are in their prime career ages of 45-64 years. Replacing experienced employees and failing to retain these employees will result in the loss of valuable skills.

As employers work to build mental health supports for employees, caregiving related challenges must be included.

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) exists to support caregivers, regardless of age, diagnosis or where they live. We are here to support you and your employees as they balance work and caregiving responsibilities. Established in the Spring of 2018, the OCO is an independent non-profit, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health.

Purpose of this guide:

- Build awareness and understanding of caregiving in the workplace.
- Guide workplaces on how to develop policies and practices that are supportive to caregivers and benefit the workplace.
- Support managers in workplaces to understand, support, accommodate and demonstrate a commitment to working caregivers.
- Empower working caregivers and enhance access to supports that address their unique challenges.

Sinha, M. (2012). Portrait of Caregivers, 2012. General Social Survey, Statistics Canada



**50% of
caregivers**
have seen
a negative
impact on their
mental health

EMPLOYERS BENEFIT FROM SUPPORTING CAREGIVING EMPLOYEES

Employers need to respond to the growing number of caregiving employees in order to strengthen economic productivity. In addition to the personal impacts on employees, workplaces face the cost of lost productivity, absenteeism, staff turnover and the loss of experienced employees. The negative consequences can be significant and detrimental to economic stability and growth.

- \$1.3 billion is lost in the Canadian workforce productivity annually due to caregiving commitments
- Reduction in work effort by Canadian caregivers averaging 2.2 million hours per week
- Loss of 157,000 full-time employees in 2012 across Canada due to caregiving pressures

\$1.3 billion is lost in workforce productivity due to caregiving commitments.



BUILDING SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACES FOR CAREGIVERS MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE, THIS IS AN INVESTMENT FOR ALL EMPLOYERS.

There is growing evidence for employers to support caregiving employees without compromising business objectives or the health, well-being, career potential and financial security of their own employees. The benefits of supporting caregivers include:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced stress or sick leave
- Improved job satisfaction and morale
- Employee loyalty
- Cost savings

Caregiver-inclusive workplace solutions can build more positive, productive, and efficient businesses. The general public as well as current and future employees will identify your workplace as an equitable, supportive and positive working environment. This can lead to your workplace being a preferred employer and leader within your sector.

Magnaye, A. Eales, J. & Fast, J. & CWiC team (May 2017). Connecting Working Caregivers Project.



MESSAGE FROM AMY COUPAL, CEO OF THE ONTARIO CAREGIVER ORGANIZATION

“I’ve been a caregiver since childhood so I understand how rewarding it can be, but I also appreciate the many challenges caregivers face. Balancing work and caregiving can be very challenging, especially during a pandemic when support services may have changed. We hear from caregivers across the province that they are concerned about losing their jobs or how to approach employers about their caregiving responsibilities. At the Ontario Caregiver Organization, we are here to support the over 3.3 million caregivers across our province as well as their employers. Thank you for taking the steps to enhance your workplace policies to better support working caregivers.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

We would like to thank the advisory group of working caregivers and employers who provided advice and input to support the development of this guide. We would also like to acknowledge the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario for their ongoing collaboration on our Caregivers in the Workplace initiative.



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Ontario

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Ontario

Funded by



This resource is meant to provide employers with general information, tips and tools as they support caregivers in the workplace. It is not a substitute for individual medical, financial, legal and management advice from professionals. The views expressed in this toolkit are the views of The Ontario Caregiver Organization and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province of Ontario. Any legal or legislative standards or practices referenced are subject to change, the Ontario Caregiver Organization and its affiliates are not providing legal advice in this document. It is the responsibility of the reader to ensure all policy and practices are up to date and within the guidelines of current governing legislation.

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WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CAREGIVING

Caregivers make up one-third (35%) of the Canadian workforce and exist in all occupations and industries. 2/3 of Ontario caregivers are employed and nearly half are employed full time.

Regardless of why or how your employees became caregivers, the needs of caregiving change over time, from day to day. Caregiving needs can be unpredictable and unexpected. As a result, many working caregivers must take time off work for managing related responsibilities and have difficulties fulfilling their work responsibilities.

CAREGIVING EXPERIENCE BUILDS FLEXIBILITY AND STRONG PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS.

Often, caregivers identify as the ‘coordinator of everything’ for the person they care for. This can include day to day management of meals, medications, in home care, appointments and future care planning. Caregiving responsibilities require strong problem-solving skills, flexibility and dependability. Having caregivers on staff who are supported in the workplace, will have the opportunity to nurture these skills and assist in building a resilient and sustainable workforce.



**45% find
balancing
caregiving
with work
stressful**

THE STRUGGLE TO BALANCE WORK AND CAREGIVING:

Sometimes, employees balancing both work and caregiving duties face unique concerns related to these two aspects of their lives. **Stigma** occurs when an individual feels they need to hide aspects of their identity from others; due to feelings of shame, inadequacy, or guilt. This can take the form of withdrawal from others, irritability, or even lead to depression or anxiety.



Many caregivers report **feeling as though they are not performing at work**, which can influence their mental wellbeing or job security. **33% find it difficult to fulfill their work responsibilities.** Consistently, caregivers report that they worry about maintaining a career while also caring for a loved one. This can lead to financial concerns, as caregivers may be required to take time off from their workplace, purchase costly essentials for loved ones, or pay for respite services out of pocket.

The Ontario Caregiver Organization has partnered with working Caregivers across Ontario as well as managers of staff to develop this toolkit. Many working caregivers feel they will face stigma in the workplace if they acknowledge their caregiving role and ask for support at work. Managers working to implement caregiver policies and procedures sometimes face the following challenges:

- No or limited employer standards focused on caregiving
- Limited support from senior leadership
- Insufficient workforce capacity to develop flexible work schedules
- Work cannot be done from home or satellite location

This guide outlines diverse strategies to identify and mitigate challenges to meet the needs of caregiving employees. The first step is to have senior leadership approval and support.

*Meredith B. Lilly (2011). The Hard Work of Balancing Work and Caregiving.
The Ontario Caregiver Organization (2019). 2nd Annual Spotlight on Ontario's Caregiver*

CAREGIVING DURING A PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted everyone across the globe. Workplaces have shifted and adapted but how do these changes impact caregivers who are already finding it difficult to balance work and caregiving? In the *2020 Annual Spotlight on Ontario Caregivers Report*, 52% of caregivers say balancing work and caregiving is more challenging during the pandemic.

Among working caregivers, more than a quarter have taken time off during the day or have taken one or more days off, while one-fifth have reduced or altered their working hours to manage caregiving. Overall, they are less likely to take time off or alter their hours than last year, likely due to working at home and flex time, both effects of the pandemic. 60% of caregivers say their employers are somewhat accommodating of their caregiving responsibilities.

Those who are working from home during the outbreak are more likely to say their employers are accommodating. 22% of employers have an official policy and 42% say there is no official policy, but their employers have helped when they could.

More caregivers feel that their work is flexible in terms of working hours and working from home compared to last year. However, 40% of caregivers don't have that flexibility. Nearly half (48%) wish their employer gave them more support.

CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES ARE MORE TIME CONSUMING DUE TO COVID-19

31% of caregivers are providing more than 10 hours of care per week, which is up from 26% before the pandemic. Those added hours are being spent providing emotional and behavioural support, providing transportation and completing tasks around the home. This isn't surprising, given the physical distancing, isolation and other restrictions in place as a direct result of COVID-19.



**52% find
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work more
challenging in
a pandemic**

CAREGIVERS ARE MORE IN NEED OF RESPITE DURING THE PANDEMIC, BUT HAVE A HARDER TIME GETTING A BREAK

The demands on caregivers have grown, and it is hard and sometimes impossible, to hire external help or get support from other family members in caring for an ill family member. Naturally, this has more caregivers feeling like they need a break. Unfortunately, it is also much harder to get a break, due to many factors, including day program cancellations, people are staying in isolation to reduce the risk of COVID-19.



60% of caregivers say their employers are somewhat accommodating



31% of caregivers are providing more than 10 hours of care per week

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (2020). 3rd Annual Spotlight on Ontario's Caregiver COVID-19 Edition

THE ONTARIO CAREGIVER ORGANIZATION IS HERE TO SUPPORT

The Ontario caregiver Organization (OCO) is here to support you and your employees. We have the tools, resources, and support services to help set you up for success. OCO tools, resources and services are co-designed by our team of dedicated staff and experienced caregivers.

E- Learning

- E- Learning modules are available to help work through the information and suggestions provided in this guide and to assist as you implement changes.
- The Employer modules are geared toward leadership and managers. We also offer other e-learning opportunities which can be viewed by anyone in your workplace and added to your learning management system.
- Access the modules:
<https://learning.ontariocaregiver.ca/>

Awareness videos

- About caregiving and OCO:
<https://vimeo.com/405088249>
- For working caregivers:
<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/workplace/>
- Information about our Helpline:
<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/find-support/helpline/>

Support programs and Services for caregivers

OCO offers a variety of programs and services for caregivers, more information is included in the [Resources and Support](#) section

Ongoing Education and Training opportunities

The OCO works with partners and caregivers across Ontario to host workshops and education sessions.

- Access our calendar:
<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/getinvolved/news-events/>
- View past sessions:
<https://vimeo.com/ontariocaregiver>

OCO's Regional Leads

Regional leads build partnerships across communities in Ontario. They can work with you to create an in-person or virtual information session.

Check out the [Templates and Resources](#) section for support materials.

Work and Caregiving a Balancing Act: Toolkit for Caregivers

Designed for the working caregiver and can be used alongside this guide to build the right strategies for each employee.

<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/OCO-Work-and-Caregiving-Toolkit-FINAL-Interactive-3.pdf>

IMPACT WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

STRESS AND BURNOUT

Stress is a natural physical and psychological response to change in our environment. We feel stress when our bodies and brains are tasked with responding to this change. **Burnout** occurs when our ability to cope with stress, what is often called resiliency, becomes overwhelmed. If you think of resiliency like a muscle, imagine attempting to lift a weight. If that weight is lifted often, it becomes easier over time. However, we need breaks; when we can't take a step back from the stressor, burnout can occur.

53% of working caregivers admit the overall management of their caregiving responsibilities is stressful. Caregivers often report higher rates of stress and burnout due to the competing responsibilities of work and home. This can be intensified by the need to continuously advocate for support or flexibility within the workplace. Caregivers often report higher rates of stress and burnout due to the competing responsibilities of work and home. This can be intensified by the need to continuously advocate for support or flexibility within the workplace.

MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illness is experienced by approximately 1 in 4 Ontarians every year. 50% of caregivers have seen a negative impact on their mental health, but not everyone will receive an official diagnosis. Caregivers may experience higher rates of anxiety and depression due to the nature of their caregiving role. Caregivers may find themselves experiencing isolation, loneliness, and extreme stress. Coupled with the normal, everyday, stress of work this can have a tremendous effect on an employee's wellbeing. Ongoing mental health challenges and limited supports within the workplace can result in lower productivity, frequent staff turnover and an unfavourable public image.

SOCIAL ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

Isolation is the experience of being separated from others, whereas loneliness is a feeling experienced sometimes during separation. For example, there are many people who experience some degree of isolation, but they are not lonely. Conversely, many people who

are not isolated may experience loneliness. Emerging research shows that loneliness can have severe effects on mental health; from experiencing increases in low mood, to severe anxiety.

Caregivers may have experiences of isolation or loneliness as a result of their caregiving. While the caregiver may continue to attend work, they could still be experiencing loneliness. This results from the inability to talk openly about their experiences. In addition, stigma plays a large role in the self-isolation of individuals. When someone feels as though they cannot talk about their experiences, they may choose to withdraw or isolate from others.

JOB AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

Many caregiving employees worry about their job security. In the *2019 Annual Spotlight on Ontario Caregivers Report*, 24% of caregivers reported being concerned about their ability to provide care at home. In that same report, it was identified that only 1 in 5 workplaces have a specific caregiver policy, many caregivers were concerned about their ability to take time when it was needed. Almost half of caregivers have some degree of concern about losing their job due to their caregiving role.

About **1 in 3 caregivers** report experiencing financial difficulty in the last year. **Almost 33% report having to use savings** to effectively perform their caregiving role, due to only about 1 in 4 reporting that they have benefits coverage through work. This has a tremendous effect not only on their mental health, but physical health as well. This can be mitigated by integrating caregiving supports into workplace benefit frameworks.

LOST CAREER POTENTIAL

Caregivers are reporting concerns about lost career potential or opportunities for advancement. **3 in 4** caregivers have taken time off work to manage their caregiving duties. This is due to the perception that taking time off in emergencies, or when other care cannot be coordinated, has a negative impact on their supervisors' perceptions of them. **1 in 3 caregivers** report their careers have been negatively impacted because of this.

Ensuring that caregiving employees have opportunities for development, having a concrete caregiving policy in place, and being clear in expectations help to build a sustainable and supportive working environment for caregivers. Suggested strategies are explored in the [What Employers Can Do to Support Caregivers](#) section.



WORKPLACE CONFLICT

When caregiving employees do not feel they can be open about their caregiving role and the struggle to balance both responsibilities, co-workers and managers may misread the signs of burnout and they do not have an opportunity to understand what the caregiver is facing. This can create animosity and conflict within the workplace, which can be avoided with supportive caregiver policies and protocols for all employees. Inclusive caregiver policies create a culture of understanding and acceptance.



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Duxbury L., Higgins C., Schroeder B. 2009. Balancing Paid Work and Caregiving Responsibilities: A Closer Look at Family Caregivers in Canada. The Ontario Caregiver Organization (2019). 2nd Annual Spotlight on Ontario's Caregiver The Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario (2020) Online Fact Sheet.

WHO ARE THE WORKING CAREGIVERS?

Every caregiving experience is unique. Building trust with a caregiving employee is crucial to understanding what would be most helpful as they balance their work and caregiving demands.

Michelle

was a young caregiver for her grandmother. She became

a caregiver at the start of her career when she was looking to grow and be challenged with new career opportunities. With the challenges of caring for her grandmother at home and her employer not understanding her role as a young caregiver, Michelle had to give up her job to care for her grandmother full-time. The lack of accommodation impacted Michelle's financial stability and changed the course of her career path.



Steve grew up as a secondary caregiver to his brother with mental health challenges.

As his parents became older, Steve stepped up to become his brother's primary caregiver and in doing so, he had to resign from his job and take on a part-time role due to the caregiving duties he took on. With support from his employer, Steve was able to join the company a year later to a role that was more flexible and conducive to his caregiving responsibilities.



Aliah is a single mother of 2 children that both have their own unique special needs. Her youngest is currently battling brain cancer for the 3rd time, and her eldest has Asperger's, ADHD and Tourettes Syndrome. She also has her parents living with her, assisting them with their medical concerns as they age.



2 out of 3 caregivers are employed, and many find it difficult to balance their job with their caregiving role. This is especially true of those like Jennifer, in the sandwich generation. To find better balance between work and caregiving, Jennifer approached her employer with solutions to make it work. Jennifer created a work plan and with the support of her employer, she has found creative ways to be more present at work while continuing to be a caregiver.

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS

5 STEPS FOR LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS



Review standards and resources provided in this guide. Conduct an audit of your current policies and procedures for both staff and volunteers (as applicable):

- Check in with managers and staff: what is needed from their perspective?
- Is caregiving included in your policies and considerations?
- What enhancements are you already making where caregivers can be acknowledged? (i.e., Mental Health or Inclusions)



Build flexible working arrangements:

- Adopt caregiver support strategies by enhancing policies and procedures to explicitly include caregiver accommodations.
- Create a back-up plan for employees who experience unexpected caregiving challenges.
- Consider job shadowing opportunities and contingency planning so staff can step in for one another as required.
- Build job sharing into organizational culture to ensure support and understanding amongst co-workers.



Provide training opportunities for managers:

- Consider working with an OCO Regional Lead to build more awareness about caregiving and how to best support caregiving employees.
- Host an awareness session for management.



Make training and support services easily available for managers and staff:

- Host caregiving education and awareness sessions on a yearly basis.
- Include caregiving in existing mental health/ equity/ inclusion or other similar education sessions.
- Add OCO's education modules and videos to your internal learning management system.



Review and Reassess your current process and expectations:

- How do you measure performance and success?
- Are these processes inclusive of caregiving employees?

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS

5 STEPS FOR MANAGERS



Review standards and resources provided in this guide:

- What do employees who identify as a caregiver need?
- What do you need to implement caregiver-inclusive management strategies?
- What suggestions do you have for leadership?



Consult with staff:

- Connect with your staff and volunteers (as applicable).
- Outline leadership commitment to caregivers.
- Review policy and procedure changes as it relates to caregiving.
- Make it clear you will support them if they have caregiving needs.
- What else is needed from their perspective?



Provide education and awareness opportunities for your team:

- Host a workshop or lunch and learn defining caregiving, how employees can support one another in the workplace and your position on supporting caregivers.
- Consider bringing in a guest speaker such as an OCO regional lead.
- Include your next steps and refer team members to supportive resources/services.



Connect Employees to Support

- Ensure your team has easy access to the Caregiver Helpline and other support services as outlined in this guide.
- Consider providing time for staff to attend education or support sessions.



Review and Reassess your current process and expectations:

- How do you measure performance and success?
- What is your process for ongoing performance reviews?
- Are these processes inclusive of caregiving employees?

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

An organization's culture is determined by feelings of trust, honesty, and fairness at work. A workplace that has a supportive culture will see increased retention, less absenteeism, and reduced insurance premiums due to an improvement in employee mental health. Provide a supportive working environment where employees can be comfortable sharing the challenges they face. When making changes to policies and procedures, it must be organization-wide and followed by all managers.

POLICIES AND PRACTICES

We recommend the following when developing internal workplace policies and practices:

- Recognize caregivers in your hiring notices, such as indicating that your workplace has flexible scheduling options and welcomes those who perform this role at home.
- Ensure caregiving employees are included in professional development opportunities and screening for advancement.
- Consider offering benefits that are specific to caregiving, such as respite care or remote work.
- Ensure that staff are clear on your internal caregiver leave policies, and what supports are available to them.
- Consider having a support for caregivers in the workplace policy as well as recognizing the caregiver experience in the development of policies and procedures.

ROLE OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS

Senior leaders set the standards and culture within the organization.

Consider the following strategies to build a supportive environment for caregiving employees and increase workplace morale and retention:

- Build a supportive workplace culture that help employees feel comfortable to tell others they are caregivers.
- Include caregiving into your organizational employee standards and benefits.
- Create benchmarks related to caregiving support for your Human Resource and management teams.
- Ensure a caregiving employee policy is mandated and developed alongside staff.
- Budget for education sessions, job sharing and remote work when possible.
- Encourage staff and management to openly discuss caregiving experiences with the intent of building a culture of understanding.

Human resource departments should familiarize themselves with the unique concerns confronting caregiving employees. They are encouraged to read our companion piece, *Work and Caregiving – a Balancing Act*, which outlines how caregivers themselves can support their health, mental health, and careers.

HR professionals should be aware of the importance of having up-to-date policies, which are written with caregivers in mind. While there is no one answer to effective caregiver leave/support policies, we recommend:

- Review the Employment Standards Act- Caregiver Leave policy.
- Ensuring all workers are aware of their rights under the Employment Standards Act to caregiver leave, if required.
- Seek out EAP/EFAP providers which have caregiving resources available, such as tele- counselling or respite services.
- Seek out benefit providers which extend coverage to dependents other than minor children.
- Provide flexible work scheduling and adopt a culture of flexible work – not everyone needs to be in the office from 9 to 5.
- Caregiver policies and procedures can be incorporated into existing workplace initiatives such as mental health and accessibility strategies.
- Host employee workshops on caregiver burnout or how best to support colleagues who are caregivers. Check out the *OCO Workplace Education Template*.

ROLE OF MANAGERS

Managers should be trained to ensure that when they are having a conversation with a staff member, that conversation is supportive and safe. We recommend looking into the following options for management training:

- Coaching skills
- Emotional Intelligence
- Mental Health First Aid
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

These courses, as well as others, teach valuable skills on how to navigate stressful situations while also supporting employee mental health. In order to have safe conversations with staff, managers should follow four easy steps which can be used if performance issues arise, when you want to support a caregiving employee or notice someone might be struggling.

- **Notice** when a staff member who is a caregiver may need support, whether through an accommodation or access to an employer benefit.
- **Discuss** what may be occurring using neutral, non-judgemental language. Ensure that you are open to what the employee is saying.
- **Arrive** at an understanding of what the concerns or challenges may be. While many of us may also be caregivers at home, the work of caregiving is inherently personal, so try not to infer your own experiences into what is going on!
- **Direct** the employee to supports available in your workplace as well as other resources that seem to fit best given their concerns.

FLEXIBLE WORK AND LEAVE

When a caregiving employee feels overwhelmed with all that is required of them, sometimes flexible work can be an effective tool for limiting stress. Flexible work can take many forms.

Flexible work hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early or late start. • Work longer days/weeks to make up for time off. • Allowing employees to work broken schedules, where they may work in the AM, take time off in the afternoon to perform their caregiving role, and then return to remote work in the early evening.
Shift work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to change work shifts. • Split shifts to provide time for caregiving between shifts. • Create an online scheduling system that allows employees to log in for shift requests/changes.
Working remotely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work from home or other location. • Consider providing technology to support off-site work.
Reduced work hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working less than regular work week. • Providing employees with paid 'work-life balance days', which can be used when they need to take unexpected time off.
Job sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing duties can make it easier to have back-up coverage during absence from work.
Phased retirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced work hours during transition to retirement.

Flexible work arrangements can be implemented to avoid burnout and minimize the need to take an extended leave of absence.



SUPPORTING CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH

Supporting the mental health of caregiving employees not only means they will be more productive at work, but also ensures that they can commit to their caregiving responsibilities outside of work.

BALANCE

Balancing work and life can be difficult for everyone. Especially when part of your life involves caregiving. Encourage staff to take vacations, talk about their day, and use benefits available. Be proactive in encouraging balance, some steps that you can take tomorrow are:

- Encouraging staff get up from their desks for lunch or a break.
- Providing a forum for staff to discuss concerns they have with their work.
- Reminding staff about company benefits, such as your EAP / EFAP.
- Reminding staff to take vacation, and that the work can wait until their return.
- Encouraging the use of work from home days, if available.

TOOLS AND TEMPLATES

The following are templates to assist you as you develop caregiving policies and procedures.

ENHANCING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CHECKLIST

Assess and Reassess

	Employees consulted? (✓)	Standards, procedures and outcome measures in place and accessible? (✓)
Senior Leadership, HR and Management team review of policies procedures and strategies		
Policies and working arrangements changed to include caregiving as required		
Working Caregiver Workshop implemented		
Plan outlined for ongoing reassessment		
The following strategies reviewed and caregiver implications assessed:		
• Flexible work hours		
• Shift work		
• Working remotely		
• Reduced work hours		
• Job sharing		
• Promotion and growth opportunities		
• Phased retirement		
Paid or unpaid leave top up options		
Promotion of EAP programs		
Promotion of Working Caregiver Toolkit		
Future workshops or education opportunities planned and in calendar for employees		
Technology available for easy access to work from remote locations and booking time off/ shift changes		
Other:		

From the list above, what are the 1 or 2 changes that be most helpful and easily implemented?

What would need to happen in order to make this possible?

CONSIDERATIONS: CONNECTING WITH A CAREGIVING EMPLOYEE

When you want to support a caregiving employee or notice someone might be struggling, a one-to-one conversation is the best next step.

It can be difficult for employees to approach their employer and share details about their caregiving role. Some employees may not even call themselves a caregiver, but when describing their situation, it will become clear that they are in fact in a caregiving role.

A conversation can open the door to creating a supportive workplace culture and build a proactive approach for the employee to effectively manage the challenges they face.

Planning ahead is critical. Take the time to think about what you want to gain from the conversation.

- **Discuss** what you have noticed using neutral, non-judgemental language. Ensure that you are open to what the employee is saying.
- **Arrive** at an understanding of what the concerns or challenges may be. While many of us may also be caregivers at home, the work of caregiving is inherently personal, so try not to infer your own experiences into what is going on.
- **Develop** an action plan together.
- **Direct** the employee to supports available in your workplace as well as other resources that seem to fit best given their concerns.

Book time to discuss privately, preferably face-to-face.

Keep the message simple when you ask for the meeting - save the details until you meet.

Get input from HR and/or senior leadership in advance.

Share your commitment to your team and each employee's wellbeing.

Be open to different ideas.

Be realistic. Consider workplace capacity and

Bring resources that can help support your conversation (example: Workplan).

Be patient. Allow time for the employee to explain the situation and find a solution together.

Follow up in writing to outline the discussion and next steps.

Check out the workplan template on the next page which can be used to follow through on next steps.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES WORK PLAN

CHANGES TO BE IMPLEMENTED:

What are the key solutions we have agreed upon: Reduced hours? Time off? Shift change? Emergency plan? Remote work? Flex hours?

KEY WORK DUTIES (list below)	AGREED UPON CHANGES TO SUPPORT IN COMPLETING THIS DUTY <i>What arrangements were discussed? How, when and where will this work get done?</i>	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR DUTIES THAT MAY NOT BE FULFILLED <i>Are there alternate duties? Are there other people/ways to get this work done?</i>
<i>Example: Writing weekly reports</i>	<i>Can be completed remotely from home</i>	
<i>Example: Launching new project</i>		<i>Consider deferring launch of project or sharing responsibility between team members</i>

Other notes: (review date)

SAMPLE HR POLICY – JOB SHARING

Definition

Job-sharing arrangements or job-sharing is an approved and planned alternate work arrangement whereby the duties and responsibilities of a position are shared by two employees, each working part-time hours to fulfill the role. All job-sharing requests must be approved by management.

Options

Shared Workweek: Each employee works two days one week and three days the next week, or one partner works two days per week and the other partner works three days per week. Alternating is permitted and must be mutually agreed upon by both parties.

Alternate Weeks: Each employee works one week on (7.5 hours per day, 5 days per week); one week off.

Agreement

If a Job-Sharing Arrangement has been approved by _____, the specific details of the Job-Sharing Arrangement must be agreed upon in writing between the employees and the _____ prior to commencement of the Job-Sharing Arrangement and signed by all parties.

Term

The job-sharing arrangement shall be reviewed by _____ on a periodic basis in partnership with the participating employees. The job-sharing arrangement may be cancelled by either employee by providing 2 weeks' notice to management.

JOB SHARING AGREEMENT

A sample agreement adapted from the Government of Canada

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

Date

Employee Name

Dear Employee Name:

Job Offer/ Job Change - Position Title

This will confirm the offer of an indeterminate position as (position title – department name), (location), on a job-sharing basis with (name of other job-sharing employee). This arrangement will become effective on (start date). You will serve a probationary period of _____ months. Any adjustments to other employment conditions or benefits are detailed in _____.

Your salary will be \$##.## per hour which represents step #, pay range ##. Other terms and conditions of employment are as per (enter HR manual name and location).

If you wish to cancel this agreement, please review policy ____ in the ____ HR manual and indicate in writing providing 2 weeks' notice to _____.

If you agree with the above conditions, please indicate your acceptance by signing a copy of this letter and returning to _____.

ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

I accept the offer on the terms and conditions outlined.

Signature

Date

cc: Other Job Share Employee
Personnel File

RETURN TO WORK SUMMARY

A sample return to work plan adapted from CMHA Ontario.

Personal and Confidential: RTW Discussion Meeting: 27 May 2017

Present at Meeting: Gerri Smith (Employee), John Bloggins (Health Services), Jack Smyth (Chief Production Engineer), Linda Veitch (HR Manager)

A meeting was conducted on the 27th of May 2017 to discuss plans for Gerri's return-to -work.

It was confirmed that Gerri will be returning to her role as a quality control specialist.

However, it has been determined that she will shift from being the evening specialist on duty, to assuming a daytime shift. This was deemed to be a positive change by the employee due to the challenges associated with nightshift work while caring for an elderly parent.

Jack explained that a new product is currently in development since Gerri left, and there have been system changes to the assembly process.

In addition, the teams are all currently undergoing retraining on the systems changes, so Gerri will not require retraining separate from the team.

Gerri confirmed that their biggest challenge in returning to work will be with stamina.

In order to address the employee's challenges, John suggested that Gerri avoid time-sensitive tasks during the initial stages of return to work. It is also suggested that a peer-coach be provided to Gerri to have a go-to person available during work hours who can clarify or take the time to aid in retraining on our assembly processes.

It was agreed that Gerri will be allowed more time to complete tasks initially, gradually working towards meeting the productivity standard within 6 months. They will also be given a flexible break schedule to accommodate issues with stamina while on the job.

John reminded Gerri of the support services available to staff in the health services area and encouraged them to access the EFAP should any minor issues arise.

Jack confirmed that there are no vacation allowances during a gradual return-to-work schedule, but that Gerri would continue to accrue vacation days which can be used after the process is complete. The return-to-work will begin on June 11th, 2018. The schedule is as follows:

11 June: M, W, F (3 Full Days)

18 June: M, W, F (3 Full Days)

25 June: M, T, Th, F (2 Full days, 2 Half Days)

2 July: M, T, Th, F (4 Full Days)

9 July: Full time

Gerri and Jack have both committed to holding weekly performance and wellness check-ins together. Should the schedule or accommodations require amendment this will be placed into writing and submitted to HR. Jack will advise the team that Gerri is to return to the Organization on 11 June 11.

RESOURCES & SUPPORTS

The Ontario Caregiver Organization's **24/7 Caregiver Helpline** provides a single point of access to information, support and services **1-833-416-2273**

Or access the **Live Chat**, available Monday-Friday 7am-9pm www.ontariocaregiver.ca

OCO's Workplace portal: Workplace Education Template, tip sheets and resources are available to support you as you commit to supporting caregiving employees.

<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/workplace/>

Action Steps for Employers

<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Employer-Action-Steps-COVID19-Impact-on-Working-Caregivers-2.pdf>

Support programs and Services for caregivers

OCO offers a variety of programs and services for caregivers, which include:

- **Peer Support:** Caregivers are matched with a mentor facing similar experiences.
<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/peer-support/>
- **SCALE:** Supporting Caregiver Awareness, Learning and Empowerment. Practical information and skills to enhance self-awareness with a focus on caregiver wellbeing
<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/scale-program/>
- **Toolkit for Working Caregivers: Work & Caregiving – A Balancing Act**
<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/OCO-Work-and-Caregiving-Toolkit-FINAL-Interactive-3.pdf>

OCO Spotlight Report on Ontario's Caregivers

<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OCO-Spotlight-report-English-Dec10.pdf>

The Canadian Mental Health Association: Provides community based mental health support to all Ontarians. Visit www.cmha.ca/findyourcmha to get real time information on your nearest branch.

The Employee Assistance Program:

www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/occupational-health-safety/employee-assistance-services/employee-assistance-program.html

Carers Canada <https://www.carerscanada.ca/>

Canadian Caregiver Coalition

<https://mcconnellfoundation.ca/grant/canadian-caregiver-coalition-ccc/>

Employment Standards Act in Ontario – Caregiver Leave

In Ontario, everyone who is required to care for someone because of a medical issue is entitled to up to eight weeks of caregiver leave. Caregiver leave can be taken consecutively, or it can be taken in separate chunks. Employers are not entitled to know what the medical condition for which care is being provided may be and cannot request that an employee take a full week of leave if only a few days are required. Employees are obligated to provide as much notice as is reasonable to their employer. For more information, visit www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/family-caregiver-leave.

Accessibility Law

Caregivers who may be experiencing their own health concerns, as a result of their caregiving role, are entitled to accommodations under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. This means that if you as their employer have a reasonable suspicion that an employee may need an accommodation, or you are approached by that employee, you are required to provide it to them. We encourage you to access CMHA Ontario's Guide on Accommodation here: www.mentalhealthworks.ca/mental-health-workplace-accommodation-guide-managers-staff/.

Human Rights

The *Canadian Human Rights Commission* in its *Guide to Balancing Work and Caregiving Obligations* note that Canadian workplaces' duty to accommodate may extend to caregivers required to take time off work or change scheduling. It's important for you to look at your existing policies and determine whether or not they account for the unique concerns which working caregivers may face. Recommendations made in their guide focus on the need for you, as an employer, to be flexible and compassionate. A copy of that guide can be found here: <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/guide-balancing-work-and-caregiving-obligations>

National Best Practices:

The Canadian Standards Association published *B701HB-18 Helping Worker-Carers in your Organization in 2018*. That document may be used by your organization to establish what roles and responsibilities management has in supporting the over 5 million working caregivers across the country. A copy of the standard can be found here:

https://www.techstreet.com/standards/csa-b701hb-18?product_id=2006651

In addition to B701HB-18, consider looking into the *National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace*. This may be beneficial to you and your employees. Commissioned by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, it utilizes a management system which identifies, mitigates and eliminates factors associated with psychosocial risk, while also promoting mental health in staff. A copy of the standard can be downloaded here: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace/national-standard>

STAY CONNECTED WITH THE ONTARIO CAREGIVER ORGANIZATION

Join Caregiver Connect, our newsletter providing updates on programs and resources. Subscribe Today: <https://ontariocaregiver.ca/getinvolved/subscribe/>



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LINKEDIN <https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-ontario-caregiver-organization/>



YOUTUBE <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyHknVCyQEQkK1Xwag-rRCA>

The Ontario Caregiver Organization is committed to working with caregivers and partners. We value the knowledge and insight of those with caregiving experience.

Share your feedback and suggestions for future editions of this guide, including any tips you may have by emailing: info@ontariocaregiver.ca

If you wish to reference any content within this guide, please use the following citation:

The Ontario Caregiver Organization, Canadian Mental Health Association (2020). Caregivers in the Workplace: A Guide for Employers.

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www.ontariocaregiver.ca/workplace

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