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A 'Care-ful' Plan

by Christina Drumm Boyd, CSA



Employers, Employees and Elder Care What you don't know Can hurt you!

In the late 70's and early 80's one of the biggest issues employers and employees faced was childcare. Women were entering into the corporate arena in droves, successfully juggling the roles of a mother, wife and career. Many progressive employers instituted "flex time" or even opened on-site daycares, which seemed to have addressed these issues effectively over the past two decades. Now a new issue plagues the workplace and will not have a simple solution.

This silent epidemic is eldercare. Over 13 percent of the U.S. population is over the age of 65 and this number will balloon to over 20 percent by 2030, according to Alan Greenspan in a report given to the U.S. Special Committee on Aging in 2003. Not only do most working professionals now have to juggle the demands of a career and parenthood, but they are also saddled with the complex responsibility of caring for aging parents often well into their own retirement years.

Any employer who thinks that this issue hasn't, isn't, or will not affect them needs to take another look because it has and it is, and it will cost you money!

What exactly is the impact of eldercare in the workplace to the employer? One out of every five employees is currently dealing with an eldercare issue while working a full-time job according to the MetLife Mature Market Institute & National Alliance for Caregiving study from 2006. The estimated cost of these caregivers in the workplace to all employers in the U.S., for a full-time employee, is between \$17.1 and \$33.6 billion dollars or \$2,110 per full-time employed caregiver. These numbers are growing every day. The costs are specifically associated with replacing employees, absenteeism, crisis in care, workday interruptions, supervisory time, unpaid leave and reducing hours from full-time to part-time.

I strongly encourage employers to evaluate your company's needs more closely by simply looking at your demographic. Is there a presence of baby boomers in your workforce (those age 41 to 59, roughly), whose parents are likely to be in their 70s or 80s? If the answer to this question is "yes", then these individuals are more than likely negatively impacting your company's bottom line right now.

Most of the clients that I speak with on a daily basis have missed a large amount of time from work before they are introduced to our services. The client did inform their employer of their crisis only to find that the employer was ill equipped to assist or address the issue of eldercare. Most clients report that even when they are referred to their company's EAP or Employee Assistance Program the information is mostly a web based tool with service providers that only seemed to add to their level of confusion. This is the reason why I started Care Connect of Hampton Roads. People need a hands-on, comprehensive approach so that senior care issues can be resolved in the most effective and efficient manner and allow the caregiver to return to work and life faster.

When looking for elder care assistance, look for a company that directly assists employers and employees with the issues of eldercare in the workplace. A holistic approach gives employees peace of mind and helps remove the unavoidable distractions that accompany senior care issues, resulting in better attendance, improved workplace productivity and retention. When an employer has decided to support its employees with elder care services, consistent education on care trends and offerings will be key to the program's success.

Direct advice for any full-time employee who has a senior loved one in their life: Get organized at work, don't allow things to accumulate in your "in box". Inquire about your company's leave policy in the event you do need time off and communicate with your supervisor and direct reports so they will be able to "pick up the ball and run with it" if you get a phone call and have to run out the door. Most importantly do your home work before a crisis occurs and have a plan A and B that can be executed when the time arrives because I can assure you that it is not a matter of if, but when you will need it. ■

Christina Drumm Boyd is a Certified Senior Advisor and President of Care Connect of Hampton Roads, Inc. which offers a holistic, total care approach to geriatric care management. Care Connect serves both the senior and the family that cares for them by addressing their core concerns... Outliving assets, health and safety and maintaining independence. She can be contacted at 757-232-9121 or at www.careconnecthr.com

Who does your Family go to when faced with Elder Care issues?



Nephew - David
Defense Lawyer



Uncle - Tom
Stock Broker



Son - Rick
IT Professional



Daughter - Renee
Real Estate Agent



Daughter - Heidi
LPN Nurse

While specialists in their field your family are not experts in piecing together a comprehensive action plan to address immediate and future care needs.



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**Serving the seniors and the families that care for them as their
"Professional Relative"**