



Supervisor NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
August 2024

How Employers Can Help Working Parents Navigate Back-to-School Season

Adapted from Entrepreneur

Picture this: It's the end of summer, and the scent of freshly sharpened pencils fills the air. Parents across the nation are bracing themselves for the annual back-to-school whirlwind. It's a time of excitement for children, but for working parents, it's a different story. They're juggling work commitments with school orientations, homework help, and the dreaded school run. It's no wonder that so many parents declare this the most stressful time of the year.

A new survey from Kiddie Academy, an educational child care center, found that when all members of the family are polled, 63% say it's Mom who has the hardest time with the first day of school. That's compared to only 27% who identified the child as being the one who struggles most.

The back-to-school season is akin to a roller coaster ride. It's filled with the highs of seeing your child's excitement for the new school year, but also the lows of trying to balance work and family life. The stress of managing both can feel like trying to juggle flaming torches while riding a unicycle on a tightrope. It's a precarious balancing act that leaves many parents feeling overwhelmed and stretched thin.

The role of employers

But what if I told you that employers hold the key to alleviating this stress? Yes, you heard it right. Employers can play a pivotal role in helping working parents navigate the back-to-school season. It's not just about being understanding; it's about taking proactive steps to support your employees during this challenging time.

Employers are like the conductors of an orchestra. They have the power to set the tempo and create harmony among the various sections. When they step up and take responsibility for helping their employees, they can turn the cacophony of the back-to-school season into a symphony of productivity and satisfaction.

Embrace flexibility

First and foremost, flexibility is the name of the game. Offering flexible working hours or the option to work from home can be a game-changer for working parents. Imagine the relief of a parent who can adjust their schedule to drop off or pick up their child from school without the fear of repercussions at work. It's not just about reducing stress; it's about increasing productivity. A happy employee is a productive employee, after all.

Think of it as a dance. When employers and employees move in sync, adjusting to each other's rhythms and steps, they create a beautiful performance. Flexibility allows this dance to flow smoothly, preventing missteps and stumbles that can lead to stress and dissatisfaction.

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Provide resources

Next, consider providing resources to help parents manage this transition. This could be as simple as sharing information about local after-school programs or offering a seminar on time management strategies. Knowledge is power, and arming your employees with the tools they need to succeed is a win-win situation.

Imagine equipping your employees with a Swiss Army knife of resources. Each tool, whether it's information about childcare services or tips on managing stress, can help them navigate the challenges of the back-to-school season. The more tools they have at their disposal, the better equipped they are to handle whatever comes their way.

Foster a supportive culture

Fostering a supportive culture is crucial. Encourage open communication and make it clear that it's okay to ask for help. Whether it's adjusting a deadline or delegating a task, small changes can make a big difference. Remember, it takes a village to raise a child, and the workplace can be part of that village.

Creating a supportive culture is like building a safety net. It provides a sense of security for employees, knowing that they can take risks and ask for help without fear of judgment or punishment. This safety net can catch them when they stumble, allowing them to bounce back quickly and continue performing at their best.

The power of employee resource groups

In the quest to support working parents during the back-to-school season, one tool stands out for its effectiveness and impact: Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs are groups within a company where employees connect over shared characteristics or life experiences. They provide a sense of community, a platform for advocacy, and a resource for personal and professional development.

Imagine ERGs as a bustling farmers market. Each stall, or group, offers something unique, catering to different needs and tastes. There's a sense of community, a shared understanding, and a wealth of resources to tap

into. For working parents, a Parents ERG can be the stall that provides the support and resources they need to navigate the back-to-school season.

A Parents ERG can be a lifeline for working parents. It provides a space where they can share experiences, exchange tips, and support each other. It's like a virtual village, a community that understands the unique challenges of juggling work and family responsibilities.

During the back-to-school season, this support can be invaluable. Parents can share advice on everything from managing school runs to finding after-school programs. They can also advocate for policies that support working parents, such as flexible working hours or childcare benefits.

Moreover, a parent's ERG can provide emotional support. Knowing that others are facing the same challenges can reduce feelings of stress and isolation. It's a reminder that they're not alone, that it's okay to ask for help, and that they have a community that understands and supports them.

Employers play a crucial role in establishing and supporting ERGs. They can provide resources, such as meeting spaces or communication platforms. They can also promote ERGs to ensure that employees are aware of them and understand the benefits of joining.

Establishing a Parents ERG sends a powerful message to employees. It shows that the company values its employees' whole selves, not just their work selves. It demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion, and to supporting employees in all aspects of their lives.

In the context of the back-to-school season, a Parents ERG can be a powerful tool for supporting working parents. It can reduce stress, increase engagement, and contribute to a positive, supportive company culture. So, as the school bells start to ring, let's remember the power of ERGs. Let's create communities within our companies where working parents can find the support and resources they need to navigate the back-to-school season with confidence and ease.

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Conclusion

The back-to-school season doesn't have to be a source of stress for working parents. With a little flexibility, the right resources, and a supportive culture, employers can help their employees navigate this challenging time with ease. It's not just good for the parents; it's good for business. So, as the school bells start to ring, remember: your role as an employer doesn't end at the office door. It extends into the lives of your employees, and your support can make all the difference.

Remember, as the great humorist Erma Bombeck once said, "The only difference between an ordeal and an adventure is attitude." Let's turn the back-to-school season from an ordeal into an adventure, both for working parents and employers.

References:

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/how-employers-can-help-working-parents-navigate/454881>

