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Employee Childcare and Eldercare

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to take its toll on the physical and mental security of working families across the United States, employers are looking for ways to improve morale as well as productivity. Families are now more than ever together as units, often with multiple generations under the same roof. With the necessity of remote education in public (and private) school systems nationwide, working adults find themselves no longer able to rely on schools and teachers to guide children throughout the workday. Families living with elders find a similar problem as the novel coronavirus has posed an undeniable health risk to older individuals, especially those sharing space in nursing homes and retirement communities. Through the 2020 Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), workers at employers with fewer than 500 employees are eligible for up to 12 weeks of paid sick leave and expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds of their regular pay – a benefit lasting until the end of calendar year 2020.

Employer's Incentive

Workplaces have begun offering childcare and eldercare coverage as additional benefits to employees, addressing an increasingly crucial, and expensive, responsibility for working American adults. When faced with the necessary choice of paying thousands of dollars annually for childcare or staying home, budget constrained workers often choose the latter, opting to work less or not at all simply to ensure their children are cared for. Employers are then left with roles to fill, recruiting costs, and time lost spent searching for replacement candidates.

The mental stress from the financial burdens of parenthood may spill over into the workplace, leaving employees feeling stressed and unmotivated. Employers lose around \$13B annually in potential earnings simply due to productivity loss and inadequate childcare resources, according to a recent 2019 study from the Council for a Strong America, a national bipartisan nonprofit. With funding for childcare options, employers may solve several issues simultaneously – improving employee and dependent welfare, bolstering productivity, and improving retention.

Socioeconomic Impacts

As seen earlier this year with the rollout of the Payroll Protection Program via the 2020 CARES emergency legislation, dramatic changes to the small business landscape in the United States virtually overnight require an equal level of oversight to ensure proper implementation and outcomes.

Often the tradeoff between work and providing for children/elders is forced upon women. Single parents have even less options. With adequately funded or covered childcare and eldercare programs, disproportionately affected minority groups will have more flexibility for working options, without having to stress over care for their loved ones. Employer-provided solutions above and beyond 2020 FFCRA mandates for workplaces with less than 500 employees include on-site daycares, flexible work hours/schedules (telecommuting), or even stipends to cover employees' care-giving responsibilities.