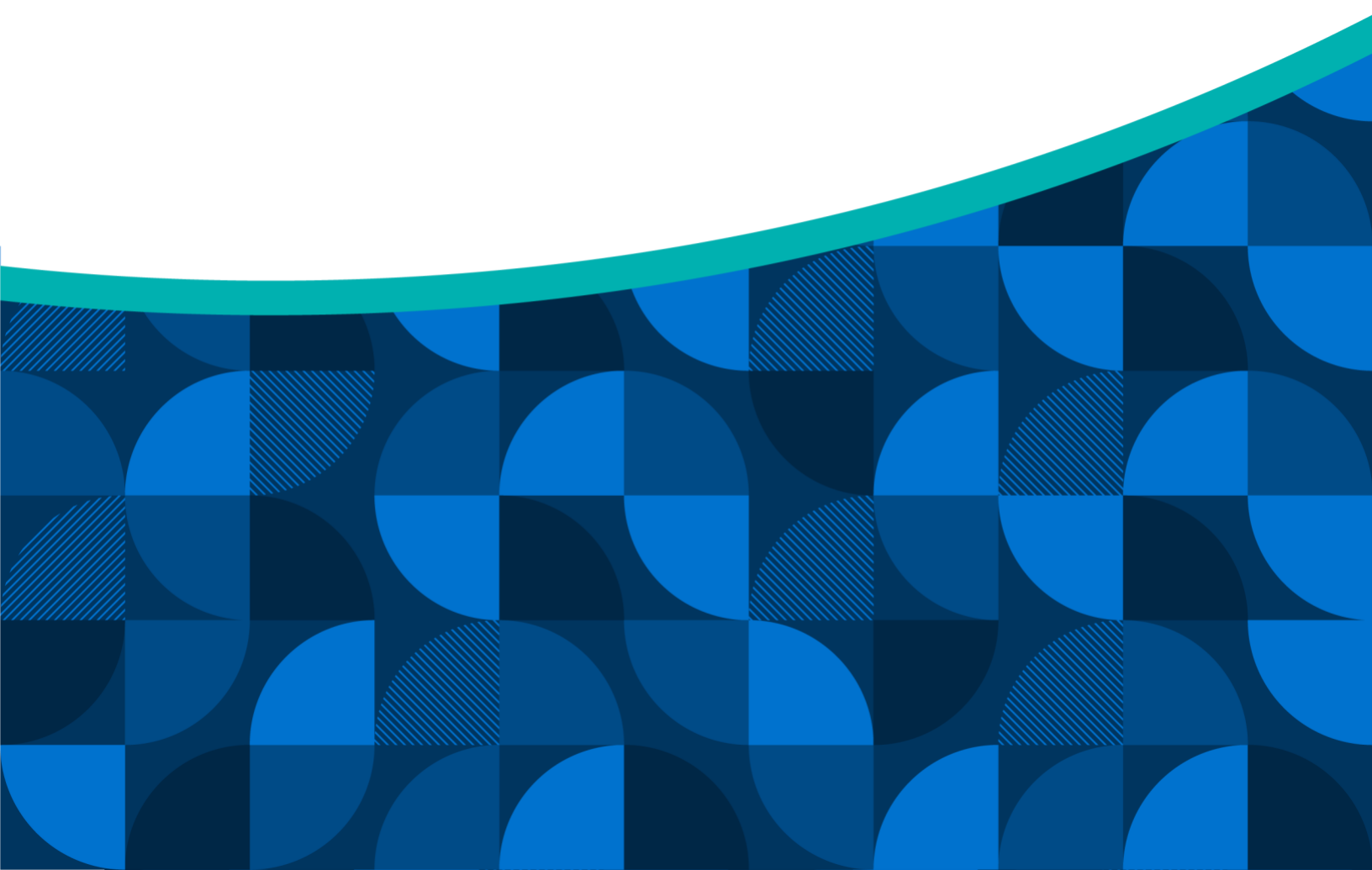




WHITEPAPER

Tackling the Growing Childcare Crisis

Strategies to Support Faculty and Staff Caregivers in Higher
Education



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Why Institutions Must Do More to Support Caregivers

The Long Shadow of the Pandemic Continues to Disrupt Personal and Professional Lives

Burnout, turnover, chronic workplace stress, and employees leaving the field – the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact higher education faculty and staff. Faculty morale remains concerningly low despite the interventions higher education leaders put in place during the pandemic, like stopping tenure clocks, revisiting promotion standards, and rebalancing workloads.

Despite a return to normal operations on most campuses, the current challenges higher education leaders face in hiring, developing, and retaining talent can feel nearly insurmountable. Data collected from faculty at the University of New Mexico (UNM) in spring 2022 revealed the majority of faculty were struggling.¹

Eighty-six percent of UNM's respondents said they were unmotivated to work. Faculty reported having more university service obligations including tutoring and mentoring responsibilities since the onset of COVID-19. Depression, anxiety, mental strain, and other health effects were also reported. Nearly half of faculty respondents had considered leaving the university.

Caregiving Remains a Top Stressor for Higher Education Employees

The UNM survey revealed that caregiving continues to be an ongoing, significant strain on most faculty. Sixty-six percent of all respondents said they spent more time caregiving for family and friends than prior to the pandemic. Respondents felt unable to focus as many (particularly women) were also balancing increased caregiving responsibilities.

Data from UNM reflect a nationwide crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated cracks in the fragile social safety net university and college employees rely on, and the sudden absence of caregiving support caused by the pandemic was a tipping point. Among all workers in the US, 33 percent of caregivers (the majority of which were women) left their jobs.² Within a 15-month period during the pandemic, nearly 16,000 childcare centers temporarily shut down across the US, representing about 10 percent of all licensed facilities in the 37 states for which there is data.³

Post pandemic, staff shortages continue to cripple childcare centers across the US as workers leave the field for better paying jobs in other sectors. As of January 2023, childcare sector employment remains 7.5 percent lower than before the pandemic.⁴ Seven in 10 childcare centers have fewer open slots than they had before the

1) Advance at UNM, "COVID-19 Pandemic Impact Report." University of New Mexico, November 2022, <https://advance.unm.edu/covid-impact-report/>

2) Kochar, Rakesh, "Fewer mothers and fathers in U.S. are working due to COVID-19 downturn; those at work have cut hours." Pew Research Center, October 22 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/10/22/fewer-mothers-and-fathers-in-u-s-are-working-due-to-covid-19-downturn-those-at-work-have-cut-hours/>

3) "Demanding Change: Repairing our Child Care System," Child Care Aware, March 2022, <https://www.childcareaware.org/demanding-change-repairing-our-child-care-system/>

4) Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), UC Berkeley, "Child Care Sector Jobs," January 9 2023, <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/brief/child-care-sector-jobs-bls-analysis/>

pandemic.⁵ As a result, waitlists have ballooned. At universities with an on-campus care facility, it can take two to three years for a parent to get an *infant* spot, meaning, a parent would need to put their name on the waitlist *years before* they even had their baby.

In Most States, Childcare Is Not Affordable (by a Long Shot)

Once childcare is arranged, the stress of finding care converts to the stress of paying for care. Over the last 40 years, childcare costs increased by 2,000 percent in the U.S.⁶

The US Department of Health and Human Services defines affordable childcare as no more than seven percent of a family's income.⁷ Comparing state-by-state staff and faculty salary data to the average cost of childcare, we find that in every state childcare is unaffordable for nearly all single-income faculty and staff (see appendices 1, 2).

In Mississippi, the state with the lowest average annual childcare cost of \$7,280, the average faculty or staff member would be spending 12 to 17 percent of their salary on care. In contrast, a tenured professor in the District of Columbia making an annual income of \$108,000 would spend 23 percent of their salary on childcare. Even if this income were doubled (e.g., \$216,000 annually), the cost of childcare would still be almost twice the affordable limit (see appendices 1, 2).

More than Salary Needed to Attract and Retain Top Talent

University salaries have not been able to keep pace with rapid inflation and the increase in the cost of living. As a result, cash-strapped universities are struggling to compete with better-resourced institutions on winning and retaining talent through pay. However, schools that cannot use salary as a lever can offer attractive benefits in areas like caregiving to be a magnet for talent.

Indeed, universities and colleges collectively must do more to support employee caregivers to compete for talent with out-of-industry companies. According to data from the 2022 100 Best Companies survey, 93 percent of the leading organizations offer back up emergency childcare, while 36 percent reimburse working parents for their everyday childcare costs.⁸

5) Leonhardt, Megan, "Staff shortages are crippling childcare centers across the U.S., and that's only the beginning of the problem," *Fortune*, November 15 2022, <https://fortune.com/2022/11/15/staff-shortages-are-crippling-childcare-centers/>

6) Doherty, Maggie, "The Quiet Crisis of Parents on the Tenure Track," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 20 2021, https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-quiet-crisis-of-parents-on-the-tenure-track?cid2=gen_login_refresh&cid=gen_sign_in

7) Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program, HHS Administration for Children and Families 2016, 81 Fed. Reg 67438 (September 30 2016) (to be codified at 45 CFR part 98).

8) "2022 100 Best Companies Winners," Seramount, 2022, <https://seramount.com/best-companies/100-best-companies-winners-2022/>

“

“...when it comes to parenthood, colleges and universities do not live up to their stated values. Institutions of higher learning can’t solve the problem of parenting in the U.S., a wealthy country that guarantees neither paid parental leave nor affordable child care to its citizens. But they can certainly do more than they are now.”

Maggie Doherty, Author
The Chronicle of Higher Education

”

This whitepaper shares advanced practices from colleges and universities that are making significant strides toward alleviating employees’ personal and professional needs around childcare.⁹ Learn how you can maximize the reach and impact of your institution’s existing caregiving benefits, provide new offerings to relieve significant caregiving pain points, and keep your pulse on the caregiving supports that employees need the most.

9) While most caregivers provide care to children, an increasing number are also caring for aging parents or other family members. In the US, nearly 42 million individuals are providing unpaid care to an adult friend or family member over 50 years old, a 7.6 million increase since 2015.

7 Childcare Pain Points and How to Alleviate Them

Current Caregiving Supports No Longer Enough

The pandemic shone a light on the cracks in the childcare system and accelerated a need for employers to both acknowledge and help employees navigate the stresses of caregiving. While the typical institution supports parents' caregiving needs by posting a list of local childcare facilities on their HR website, providing an (oversubscribed) onsite childcare facility, and offering a free membership to online caregiving marketplaces like Care.com, benefits like these are no longer enough.

With the increase in parenting and professional responsibilities many employees are experiencing coming out of the pandemic, caregiving has never felt more stressful. In this section we've identified the seven most challenging caregiver pain points and what institutions can do to address them right now.

Pain Point 1: Finding Flexible Childcare

Finding an affordable, flexible, and trustworthy caregiver can feel impossible for many new parents. Most on-campus daycare centers have long waitlists for infant spots and local daycares are similarly oversubscribed. Parents of school-age children compete for spots in summer camp programs or take personal time off when schools are closed but the university remains open.


Many colleges and universities offer premium access to online marketplaces for caregiving like Care.com as part of their employee benefits. The University of Michigan (U-M) went beyond offering a free account with Care.com and created the Family Helpers Posting Board facilitated by U-M's Work-Life Resource Center. The job board aims to match employees needing childcare support with students wishing to provide care.

The services offered on the posting board not only include childcare, but personal care support, elder care, pet care, tutoring (virtual or in-person), house sitting, yard work, and even housekeeping.

U-M students, recent U-M graduates, and benefits-eligible U-M retirees create a profile on the Family Helpers posting board. Currently affiliated U-M faculty, staff, and students who want to hire a Family Helper can view profiles and inquire with Family Helpers individually. On the posting board, U-M provides a clearly stated disclaimer that the university does not run background checks on Family Helpers and that the posting board is not a university program or service.

The Family Helpers Posting Board provides a low-lift offering that can decrease childcare costs, create jobs for students, and support U-M community members across a spectrum of needs.


In the graphic below, we illustrated what a job board similar to U-M's could look like.





Welcome to EAB U Family Helpers Job Board


Hi there!

What kind of care do you need?


 Child care


 Tutoring


 Pet care


 Senior care

48 Caregivers Found

\$18/hr
Arlington, VA

Available for occasional/backup sitting. Great with toddlers. Lots of childcare experience.

\$20/hr
West End, DC

Need a calculus tutor for your child? Look no further!

Disclaimer: EAB U does not run a background check or vet caregivers in any way. You assume all risk when hiring a caregiver through this job board.


Pain Point 2: Securing Backup Care When Schools Are Closed

Caregiving strain can peak when there are unexpected disruptions to normal care routines, like when schools are closed for holiday breaks or inclement weather. Many institutions offer access to back up care through online providers like Care.com or Bright Horizons. However, unsubsidized backup care, which can cost more than \$130 for an 8-hour workday, can be prohibitively expensive for employees. Parents may also feel uncomfortable leaving their child in the care of someone they do not know.




The University of Pennsylvania (Penn) expanded its on-campus [Penn Children's Center](#) to provide backup childcare when university operations remain open, but the local school district is closed due to inclement weather. The center is open from 9:00am to 6:00pm and charges just \$15 a day per child. By providing onsite supervised care, parents at Penn can still show up to work and know their children are nearby and well cared for.

Penn's Snow Day Drop-in Care

Quick Facts

-  9AM-6PM
-  \$15/day for benefits-eligible university employees
-  Ages 12 weeks to 12 years old
-  Spots are provided on a first-come first-serve basis; space is not guaranteed.

Benefits of Drop-in Care

-  Parents can go into work knowing their child is nearby and well cared for
-  All faculty and staff can use the drop-in care
-  Care is provided for older children who still need supervision

Institutions considering a drop-in care program should annually notify and remind employees of this benefit in the late fall/early winter when inclement weather is on the horizon. Urge employees to preregister and fill out all necessary paperwork ahead of time so their child will be promptly approved to attend when there is a school closure.

Taking It One Step Further: This practice can be expanded to include other days of the year when the local school district is closed but the institution remains open, such as school vacations and state and federal holidays.

Pain Point 3: Paying for Caregiving

Paying for childcare is a significant burden for most parents. In our analysis of employee salary data at private and public universities, we found that no states offer affordable childcare for faculty and staff making the average annual salary. While many institutions have on-campus childcare centers, these centers are often revenue-positive and charge the same in tuition as centers in the local community. Even centers that offer scholarships or sliding scale fees are still prohibitively expensive. And parents of school-age children must often scramble to find and pay for summer camps and aftercare programs.

To help offset the cost of care, some institutions are providing financial subsidies. [Yale University](#) reimburses eligible employees up to \$4,000 per calendar year for a wide array of caregiving, including licensed childcare (center or in-home), summer camp, before/after school programs and independent childcare providers (i.e., nanny or babysitter). Yale sets itself apart from most universities by making its childcare reimbursement available to postdoctoral associates and fellows.

Employees receive the subsidy after completing an online application and submitting receipts from care providers to International Scholarship and Tuition Services, an educational assistance program management company that runs the reimbursement program. Reimbursements are issued via payroll into the employee's paycheck.

Yale's reimbursement subsidy recognizes that caregiving can be costly and stressful even for higher income earners. Employees earning an annual salary of up to \$200,000 are still eligible for up to \$2,000 in reimbursements per year. Not only does the subsidy offset the cost of care, but the benefit stands out among other university employers and therefore serves as an attractive hiring and retention tool.

Yale University Childcare Reimbursement Subsidy

Eligibility Criteria



Age

Children must be 6 years old or younger



Employee Type

Faculty, managerial & professional staff, postdoctoral fellows, postdoctoral associates



Reimbursement Amount by Salary

- <\$116,000 → up to \$4,000/year
- \$116,000-\$159,999 → up to \$3,000/year
- \$160,000-\$200,000 → up to \$2,000/year

Pain Point 4: Dealing with Hidden Costs

Many new parents anticipate that childcare will be expensive. However, they can be unprepared for the hidden costs associated with caregiving. For example, new equipment may need to be purchased for a home office if a work-from-home arrangement is put into place. Travel to attend professional development events like conferences or to promote research collaborations requires paying for overnight childcare.

Recognizing the struggle new parents experience familiarizing themselves with advancements in their field and adjusting to a work schedule that accommodates their new caregiving responsibilities, faculty at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in the United Kingdom can receive funding to help them quickly reintegrate into academic life and perform their jobs at an optimal level. Within one year of returning from parental leave, faculty members can apply for and receive a £1,000 grant.

Caregivers fill out an application that asks how they plan to use the funding. After using the money, grantees are required to take a short survey to share how the grant was helpful.

Grant money from the "Return to Work Fund" can also be used to pay for fees and travel costs associated with attending conferences and other professional development events. In addition to covering travel costs for employees, UEA generously allows funds to be used to cover travel costs of family members, providing a morale boost and extra support for the faculty member.

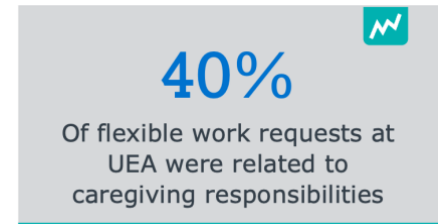
Brown University also provides a grant to defray the cost of care associated with work commitments outside of normal work hours. It can be prohibitively expensive to pay for care on weekends, evenings, and overnight. As a result, faculty with dependents are forced to make tradeoffs regarding how often they can attend off-campus professional gatherings and fulfill professional commitments.

Brown's [Dependent Care Travel Fund](#) ensures that childcare costs do not deter faculty members from participating in important career development opportunities like attending conferences and research gatherings, speaking at events, and fulfilling professional responsibilities that occur outside of the normal hours of care. Full-time faculty, both tenure and non-tenure track, can apply for awards of up to \$1,500 per year to pay for additional hours of childcare or for travel expenses.

Faculty complete an online Dependent Care Travel Fund Application two weeks in advance of travel or a local professional commitment that requires care outside of normal caregiving hours. In the application, faculty provide a description of the event, why it is important for professional development, a description of how the funds will be used, and a budget. The award is a taxable benefit.

Pain Point 5: Responding to Emergencies

When children are home sick or other family members need support, an employee may feel worried and unable to be fully present at their job. Some institutions like the [University of California](#) system allow employees to use their sick leave to care for



family members in times of illness or incapacitation.¹⁰ The University of East Anglia expands on the UC system's benefit and provides five additional days of paid sick leave specifically to be used for short-term care of family members, such as taking a family member to the doctor or helping them recover from illness or surgery.

Expand just-in-time leave options at your institution that go beyond providing day-to-day care for a child and consider the other caregiving responsibilities of employees. Broadening leave policies demonstrates to employees that taking the time and space to care for family is valued and encouraged by the institution.

Pain Point 6: Making Time to Participate in Important Moments

Some of children's most important educational activities occur during work hours. Parents can feel discouraged by their supervisor from leaving work to go to their child's daytime educational activities and feel guilty if they are unable to attend. Providing parents with time off to attend their child's school events demonstrates the institution understands the importance of being present for defining family moments.

Several states now have laws requiring employers to provide *unpaid* leave to participate in or assist with a child's school or daycare activities. As a result, colleges and universities in these states provide employees anywhere from eight hours of leave per calendar year to eight hours of leave per month to engage in their child's educational activities.

Institutions not required by law to offer this benefit should consider adding it to their benefits package. The policy should allow parents to take at least eight hours of unpaid leave per calendar year to participate in their child's educational activities such as parent/teacher conferences, school meetings, field trips, academic competitions, and theater/music performances.

Pain Point 7: Navigating Caregiving Benefits Help

New parents can feel overwhelmed by both the abundance and lack of childcare resources. For example, our research has surfaced university HR websites that link to every licensed childcare center in the state and describe in detail all the caregiving resources available on campus and in the community. On the other end of the spectrum, we found sparse websites with almost no information about employee caregiving benefits beyond the institution's parental leave policy.

While a university HR representative can explain benefit offerings to employees, at most institutions the burden is on the employee to understand and identify the right mix of services to best meet the needs of their family. Colleges and universities can help employees better navigate work and life by providing one-on-one consultations with a benefits staff member who is deeply familiar with the caregiving resources on campus and in the community.

George Washington University's (GWU) [Family Care Resources](#) office has a consultation and referral service that helps GWU employees find quality care for their children, adult dependents, aging parents, and close relatives. Employees can

10) University of California, Pay for Family Care and Bonding, <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/compensation-and-benefits/other-benefits/pay-for-family-care-bonding.html#:~:text=UC%20is%20committed%20to%20supporting,with%20federal%20and%20state%20law.>

schedule 1-hour consultations with a family care consultant in person, by phone, and via e-mail to discuss their individual needs and questions.

After an initial meeting, a family care consultant conducts research and reaches out to potential caregivers that meet an employee's needs, collecting need-to-know information such as cost and availability. The consultant then follows up with the GWU employee and provides them with their findings to help guide the employee towards making an informed decision about their relative's or dependent's care.

Expanding on GWU's service, employees at [Cornell University](#) also have access to flexible work consultants who are available to help employees understand their flexible work options and how to propose these options to a supervisor.

While hiring a family care or flexible work consultant may be out of reach for your institution, consider designating a current work/life benefits specialist to fill this role. Readjust and delegate some of the current employee's responsibilities to make time in their schedule to respond to inbound inquiries and to offer one-on-one consultations.

How to Raise Awareness and Drive Usage of Current Caregiving Supports

While higher education as a sector must do more to support caregivers of young children, many institutions already have robust caregiving policies and programs, but do a poor job communicating them to employees. However, relying on traditional communication channels (e.g., email and newsletters), providing benefits information on the HR website that is only relevant to new parents, and expecting information gatekeepers like department chairs and deans to connect employees to resources causes caregiving benefits to be underutilized at many colleges and universities.

To get the most out of what your institution already offers, this section shares innovative practices that amplify the voice and reach of HR to heighten employees' awareness of institutional caregiving supports.

A Comprehensive, Yet Accessible Website Is Fundamental

Most employees seeking information about their institution's caregiving benefits will look online first. A comprehensive yet easy-to-navigate webpage is critical to ensuring employees can quickly find the information they need. In our research, we reviewed benefits webpages across institution types. We found that while most institutions have websites describing caregiving benefits, they often focus only on information related to parental leave policies and resources available to new parents (such as listing local daycare centers).

The University of Michigan's (U-M) "[Child Care Resources](#)" webpage is a strong example of a caregiving website that is comprehensive and also easy-to-navigate. The website uses straightforward, clear language about a variety of childcare resources and steers away from complex HR policy language used in many other institutions' benefits websites. On U-M's landing page, each caregiving resource is briefly described and has a link to learn more information.

U-M's website goes beyond describing only the caregiving benefits in an employees' benefits package and includes on-campus and local supports such as:

- A database of all state-licensed childcare centers
- University of Michigan's children's centers
- A job board that matches students with UM-affiliated families looking for care
- Back-up childcare options
- Advice on how to finance childcare

4 Questions to Ask When Reviewing Your Institution's Caregiving Website

- Are there resources for parents with school-aged children?
- Is the language used accessible to employees whose primary language is not English?
- Is the website at the top of search engine results?
- Is there a photo, name, and phone number of a benefits contact who can answer caregiving questions?

Leverage Current Wellness Conferences and Resource Fairs to Showcase Caregiving Offerings

Institutions typically disseminate benefits information at employee wellness conferences or resource fairs. Showcasing information about caregiving offerings at your institution's conference is a low-lift way for HR to raise employee awareness. In 2021, the University of Michigan included a new session in their annual virtual conference, "Pandemic Parenting," a roundtable that discussed reintegration into schools and childcare during the current phase of the pandemic.

The roundtable gave employees a space to exchange ideas with one another as well as the opportunity to get their questions answered in real time by experts. In addition to providing a supportive and informative session for caregivers, it doubled as an opportunity to showcase U-M's extensive caregiving resources to the employees that needed them the most.

Consider adding a caregiving session as part of your institution's annual benefits conference as well as making caregiving a topic of HR webinars and information sessions throughout the year. Like U-M, bring in outside experts, such as a community psychologist or a teacher, to increase the appeal and quality of the session. Use the session to highlight university caregiving benefits and how they can be used to alleviate the stress and burden of caregiving. Introduce benefit experts and liaisons on campus so employees know who to contact if they have follow-up questions.

Tap into Existing Parenting Networks

Connecting with parenting networks on campus is another low-effort approach to raise awareness of caregiving benefits because it takes advantage of communication

channels that are already in place. The University of California San Diego's (UC San Diego) [Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Association \(PGCA\)](#) provides space for employees to connect with peers that share a common interest. The PGCA is a peer support network consisting of anyone in the UC San Diego community who is interested in advocating for parents, guardians, and caregivers. The group's mission is to:

- Create a supportive campus environment for UC San Diego staff, faculty, and university affiliates who are parents, guardians, and/or caregivers.
- Provide opportunities for networking, community building, and informational exchange.
- Host educational workshops, trainings, and seminars to support the personal and professional growth of parents, guardians, and caregivers at UC San Diego.

The PGCA is one example of a caregiver network that exists on most college and university campuses. HR units can leverage relationships with these networks to get the word out about caregiving resources to the employees that need them most. We first recommend identifying the parenting networks and communication channels on your campus. Reach out to the network coordinators and periodically invite them to share information about caregiving benefits, resources, programs, and services that are on campus and in the local community. HR units can also create a channel within their own internal communication system (like Slack or Microsoft Teams) that caregivers can join to get updates, ask questions, and connect with other caregivers on campus.

Amplify the Reach of Caregiving Offerings Using Wellness Volunteers

Benefits teams can struggle to get the word out about caregiving offerings, and too often university employees are unaware of all the supports available to them. The standard channels HR uses to disseminate information, like periodic newsletters, can get lost in inboxes and annual benefits fairs are not always well-attended.

To amplify communication, innovative institutions are leveraging more peer-to-peer communication. At University of Texas Austin (UT Austin), [Wellness Champions](#) act as an extension of the wellness team by serving as liaisons between their unit and HR. Wellness Champions are faculty and staff volunteers who meet four times a year with HR employees to learn about benefit programs and new offerings. Champions are expected to share information about wellness events, activities, and programs with their respective units and disseminate information through email and posting flyers. HR provides all the marketing materials Champions need to market the events and programs.

The time commitment for Wellness Champions is minimal: the wellness team expects Wellness Champions to attend at least three lunch seminars a year, including a kickoff meeting, and to commit at least 4 hours a month to raising awareness of wellness programs. To recruit volunteers, HR shares an interest form that outlines all the requirements to be a Wellness Champion.



Minimal Time Commitment

3 Lunchtime Seminars/Year **4** Hours/Month

Attending wellness events and sharing information with respective units

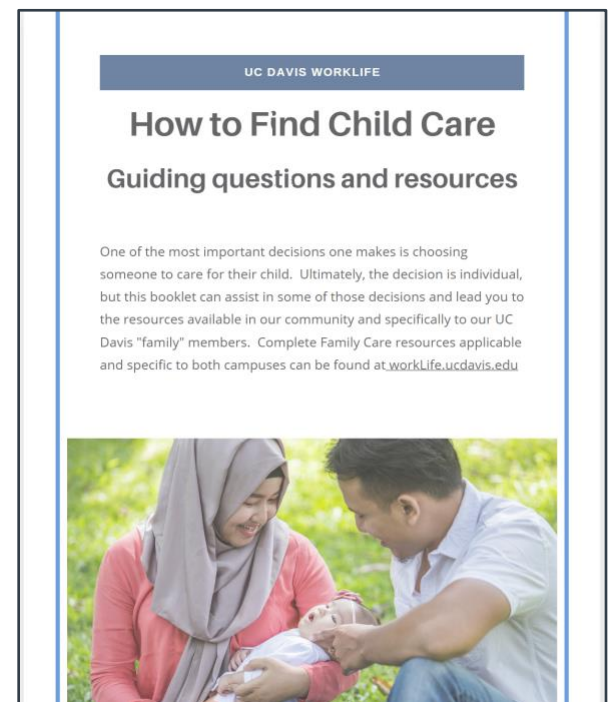
While a peer-to-peer approach requires a significant amount of HR involvement, it can significantly scale HR's reach. For institutions interested in adopting a similar approach, we recommend advertising the Wellness Champions program in new employee orientation, annual benefit fairs, wellness events, and by reaching out to department leaders to identify employees who may be interested. Provide an online application for interested volunteers to fill out. Universities can also give incentives for volunteering, such as swag and discounts on wellness and fitness memberships.

Make it Easier for Department Heads to Distribute Caregiving Information

Employees often look to their manager to answer questions about benefits. Since department heads and deans can act as information gatekeepers, it is critical they have accurate and current information about available caregiving offerings. Human resources must keep managers informed about caregiving resources beyond traditional communication channels like emails and newsletters.

The HR department at the University of California Davis (UC Davis) developed a booklet that guides employees through the campus's family care resources. The booklet describes on-campus childcare options, local community supports, and links to other family care resources available to employees. While the booklet does not list every caregiving option, it acts as a starting point to navigating childcare, and points employees to additional benefits available to them as their child grows.

A caregiving booklet like UC Davis's requires minimal investment for an HR team to adapt and share with department heads and deans. When an employee has or anticipates having childcare needs, unit leaders have current and accurate information on hand that they can easily share electronically or in hardcopy form. We recommend the HR department send an updated pamphlet annually to department chairs, deans, and managers, and consider placing printed copies in break rooms and office spaces. Further, the booklet should be produced in other commonly spoken languages on campus to make the information accessible to all employees.



Going Beyond Self-Serve Resources to Ensure All Employees have Equal Access to Benefits Information

Institutions with greater HR capacity should go beyond self-serve resources like a website, wellness conference, and resource guide to make information available to all employees. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) coordinator at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) ensures that all employees have the information they need about benefits, especially employees who are least likely to access them. The EAP coordinator evaluates which departments have low utilization of benefits,

typically departments with a lot of hourly employees or employees working non-traditional hours like facilities, housing, dining, and transportation.

The EAP coordinator then proactively reaches out to the department head to recommend a benefits information session and schedules a time based on the department's availability. Both an EAP representative and a member of the HR wellness team participate in the session and offer language support to Spanish-speaking employees. During the session, the EAP coordinator describes the benefits available and helps sign the employees up for benefits in the moment using HR-provided iPads.

To ensure that the most vulnerable employees at your institution have equal access to benefits information, assess which departments have low utilization of benefits and proactively reach out to the head of the department to recommend an information session. Translate benefits information into employees' primary language and/or have a translator at information sessions to provide real-time language support. Help employees navigate online offerings and consider signing them up for benefits during the session.

Aligning Benefits Vendors to Better Guide Employees to the Right Service Offerings

Increasingly, forward-thinking institutions that offer an array of caregiving resources to employees rely on vendors to deliver services while also administering in-house benefits programs. With various programs managed by different vendors and offices, it can be difficult for an employee to piece together the different caregiving programs and understand how they can use the various services to best support their caregiving needs. Furthermore, when employees have questions or need more information, it can be confusing to be directed to someone internally for one program and to an external vendor for another. Using multiple vendors can also create inefficiencies if vendors are offering similar services.

To streamline and coordinate caregiving offerings, The [HR Center for WorkLife and Wellbeing](#) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) brings together representatives from each of its worklife and wellbeing vendors for an in-person half-day meeting on campus. In the meeting, vendor representatives share brief presentations overviewing the services they offer to MIT. The vendors then problem-solve and coordinate how to best connect MIT employees to services.

MIT Vendors Work Together to Provide Seamless Service Delivery



MIT Gathers Vendors to Coordinate Caregiving

Held half-day gathering at MIT for vendors to present on their services and coordinate how to best connect employees to benefits



Vendors Cross Refer Employees

Vendors are knowledgeable about internal and external benefits and services, and they can cross refer employees. MIT provides a benefits reference guide for vendors to keep on hand.



Employees Access Right-Fit Benefits

Employees are well-informed about their options and are more easily be connected to right-fit benefits

Because the benefits vendors are aware of the offerings each provides, they are expected to cross-refer employees. For example, when an employee contacts one vendor about their offerings, the vendor is also knowledgeable about other benefits

and resources at MIT and can refer the employee to the right set of resources, even if those benefits are beyond what the vendor offers. The Center also provides an information guide to vendors outlining the Institute's worklife and wellbeing resources to have on hand as a reference when MIT employees reach out.

HR offices with the capacity to invest in providing a seamless, low-lift user experience can bring vendors together either in-person or virtually to coordinate service delivery. Like MIT, they can also create and distribute a quick reference guide to all the caregiving benefits the university offers so vendors can easily cross-refer employees to the best-fit resources.

Regularly Assess Caregiving Needs to Identify and Fill Benefit Gaps

In our review of caregiving offerings across higher education institution types and sizes, we found many HR offices are overly focused on pushing out information about benefits and lack insight into the wellness wants and needs of employees across units. Institutions that appear to provide more holistic benefits packages find ways to keep a finger on the pulse of evolving employee childcare needs by maintaining open lines of communication with employees. Through informal and formal networks, HR units at these institutions gather employee input and adjust offerings to ensure that policies and programs help reduce current and future caregiving demands.

Maintain Ongoing, Open Dialogue with Unit Leaders

At Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), the provost's office surfaces and addresses employee concerns through its Academic Leadership Forum (ALF). The ALF is a virtual, monthly meeting for deans and chairs that creates an open dialogue between mid-level leaders and senior administrators.

At CMU, attendees (130 to 180 per forum) submit questions in advance via a publicized Google sheet; to keep the agenda on track, no questions are taken during the forum. Experts and guest speakers from across campus are deputized to help prepare and provide substantive responses that are answered during the forum. One individual in the provost's office manages incoming questions and reaches out to campus stakeholders asking them to serve as expert guest speakers or to answer

The Academic Leadership Forum (ALF)



A virtual monthly forum to address top concerns and questions among academic leaders

▶ **Attendees:** Deans, Associate Deans, Department Heads, Provost's Cabinet and their Leadership Teams

▶ **Led by the Provost** and moderated by an Associate Vice Provost

questions.

▶ **130-180** Attendees per Forum

Key Elements of a Successful Leadership Forum

- 1 Concerns and questions are collected before the forum
- 2 Agenda finalized and distributed prior to forum
- 3 Cross-campus leaders attend to provide guidance for questions outside the provost's expertise
- 4 Formal communication channels created to share out information after the forum

Engagement in the ALF is high with monthly attendance remaining steady over time. Since concerns are carefully and thoughtfully addressed by campus experts, employees feel heard and continue to contribute to the dialogue.

Childcare is a topic of concern frequently voiced through this channel as many employees are struggling to meet both family and professional demands. As a result of childcare concerns expressed through the ALF, CMU is expanding their childcare center to accommodate more children.

Establish Reporting Line to Senior-Level Administrator to Elevate Childcare Concerns

Employee feedback about caregiving needs can be minimized in the face of an array of new initiatives at the cabinet level that all compete for the same budget dollars. Benefits program coordinators rarely have the visibility they need with senior university leaders to successfully advocate for new policies and an increased budget.

The University of California San Diego's (UC San Diego) [Campus Child Care Advisory Committee](#) serves as the go-to body of knowledge for all things related to childcare across the large, decentralized university. Critically, the committee has a direct reporting line to the Vice Chancellor for Resource Management and Planning, a cabinet-level position, ensuring that the committee's advice and recommendations will receive senior-level attention. Advisory Committee members discuss and formulate policies to recommend to the vice chancellor who works with colleagues across the institution for their support and approval.

In addition to their advocacy role, the committee serves as a repository for all information, surveys, policies, and studies about childcare at UCSD, making it easy for employees to identify who they should speak with to advocate for their childcare needs.

Similarly, at the University of California Berkeley, [The Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Work and Family](#) brings together faculty, staff, and student representatives once a month to discuss and improve work-life benefits for university employees and even students.

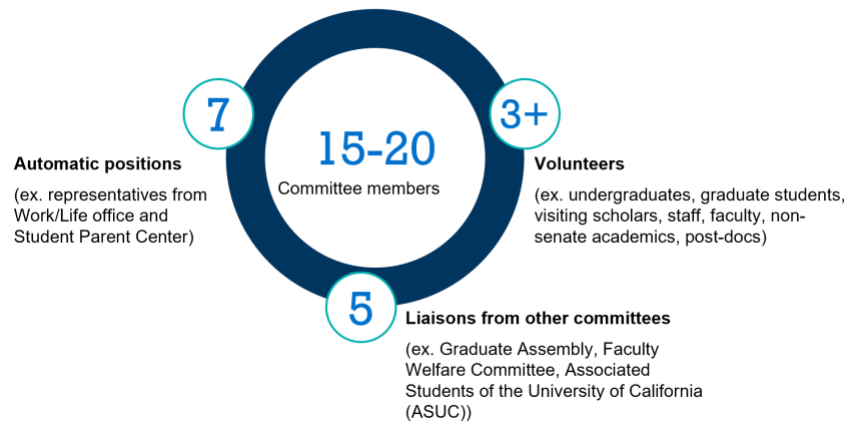
The committee has 15 to 20 members including seven members with automatic positions, like representatives from the Work/Life program, Graduate Division, and Student Parent Center. In addition, there are liaisons from other campus committees like the Faculty Welfare Committee, Chancellor's Advisory Committee on the Status of Womxn, and the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC). Other committee members are volunteers from across the university and represent diverse perspectives and populations.



Advisory Committee Charge

- Provide a forum to discuss childcare concerns
- Work together to create solutions that alleviate caregiving strain
- Help all members of the campus community meet their caregiving responsibilities

UC Berkeley's Advisory Committee Roster



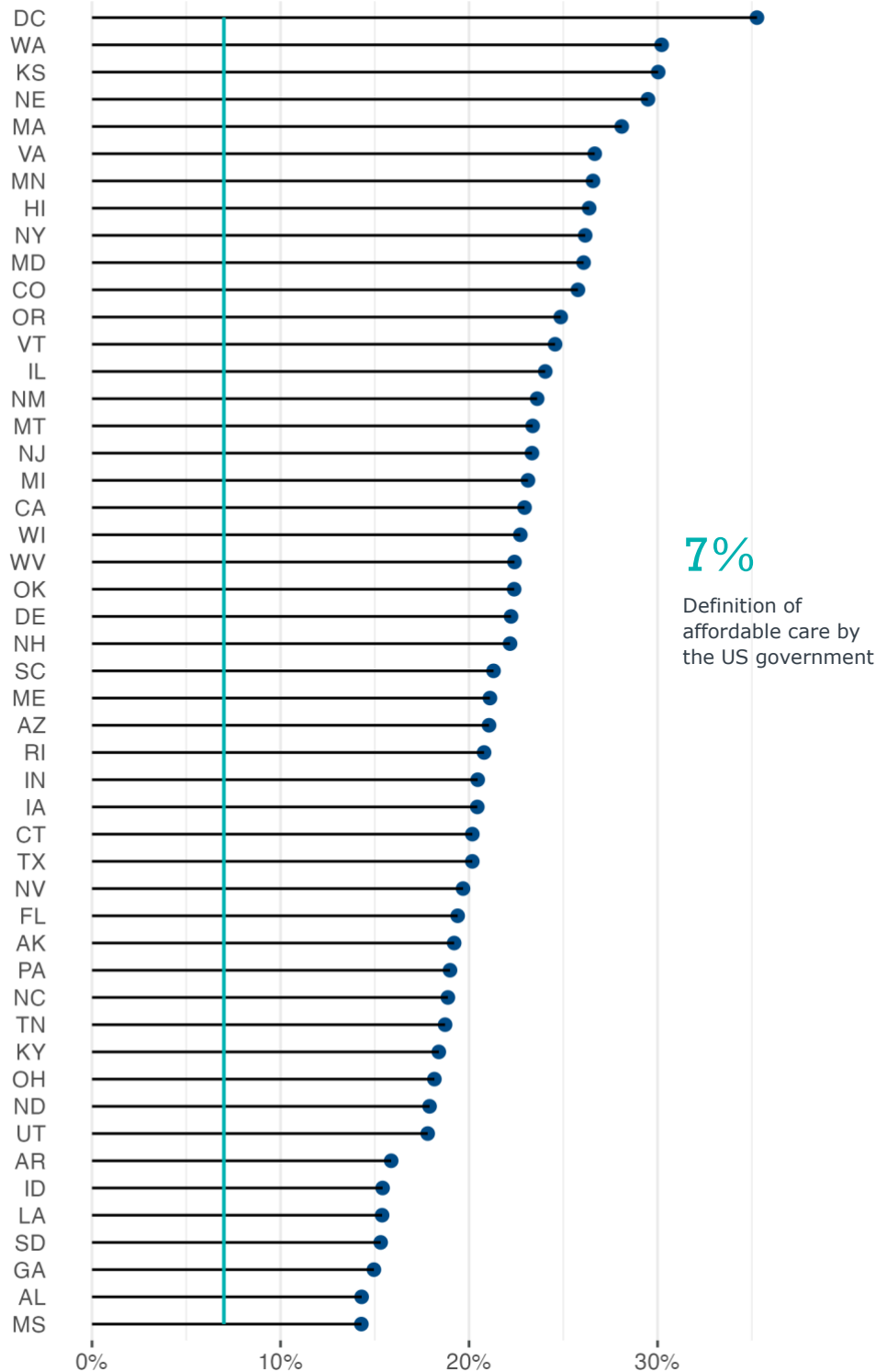
At the start of each academic year, the committee identifies three to four topics related to work and family on which to focus. The committee members meet with other campus committees and additional stakeholders to gather feedback and ideas and formulate policy recommendations to present to the university chancellor at an annual meeting.

Because the committee has a direct line to the chancellor, it has been successful in advocating for impactful policies that have led to the creation of UC Berkeley's early childhood education and elder care programs, backup care benefits, and eight weeks of paid parental leave.

Appendix 1: Cost of Childcare as a Percentage of Annual Staff Salary

Childcare Is Unaffordable for Higher Education Staff Nationwide

Calculated as average annual cost of childcare divided by average annual staff salary, by state



Public Institutions

\$61,916
Average staff salary across the US

21%
Average amount of salary spent on childcare

7%
Definition of affordable care by the US government

Private Institutions

\$58,170
Average staff salary across the US

23%
Average amount of salary spent on childcare

!) Salaries unavailable for Wyoming

Source; Child Care Aware Cost of Care (2022); Chronicle of Higher Education (2022). Staff Salaries [Data set].

Appendix 2: Cost of Childcare as a Percentage of Annual Faculty Salary

No State Provides Affordable Childcare for Caregivers Making the Average Faculty Salary

Calculated as average annual cost of childcare divided by average annual faculty salary, by state

