



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 15, 2019

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Wisconsin Employers Report the Impacts of Caregiving while State Recognizes National Caregivers Day

Madison, WI - The [Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance](#) is releasing the results of its new statewide employer survey to recognize February 15 as National Caregivers Day. See results of the survey here: <http://wisconsincaregiver.org/employer-engagement-workgroup>

National Caregivers Day is observed annually on the third Friday in February, recognizing the careproviders, both paid and unpaid, who provide personal cares of all types to people with disabilities, older adults and other family members and friends who require support to remain healthy and living in their homes and communities. It is estimated that in Wisconsin, 549,000 caregivers are providing 588,000 million hours of care to loved ones annually, valued at nearly \$6 billion dollars.¹

Employers recently confirmed the impact of caregiving on the Wisconsin workforce in a [survey](#) sponsored by WFACSA and released this month.

"When a caregiver doesn't get the support they need at home to provide care for a loved one, job productivity often suffers," says Lisa Pugh, WFACSA Co-Chair.

The survey was taken by a total of 222 employers across various sectors of the state economy. On average, companies report that 44% of their employees have family caregiving responsibilities with nearly three-quarters of employers reporting that caregiving increases stress in the workplace.

Wisconsin results mimic those of a just-released [national Harvard Business School Employer study](#) indicating that women are more impacted by caregiving responsibilities and that employers are not widely addressing the caregiving crisis through non-traditional strategies and changes in their benefits package.

The [Harvard study](#) found that the growing caregiver crisis is adding millions in hidden costs to businesses through employee turnover and absenteeism. In addition, the study concluded that "there is little evidence that employers understand the broad spectrum of enduring caregiving responsibilities that their employees confront."²

¹ National Center on Caregiving <https://www.caregiver.org/caregiving-across-states-50-state-profiles-2014>

² <https://www.hbs.edu/news/releases/Pages/growing-caregiving-crisis.aspx>

The most common strategies Wisconsin employers indicated they used to support their employees with caregiving responsibilities were allowing flexible schedules (74%) and making referrals with Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) (50%).

“WFACSA members encourage human resources professionals to align employee support strategies with current trends to get and keep quality employees, including caregivers,” says Lisa Schneider, member of WFACSA.

Suggested strategies include:

Flexible Work Hours:

Caregiving employees are seeking increased flexibility over their work environments. Help employees remain engaged and productive using telecommuting and remote positions.

Technology:

Analytics may help businesses analyze root causes, such as the need for manager training, review of compensation strategies for caregiving employees, or a change in the work culture that will address caregiver stress or help with fulfilling work duties.

Health, wellness and adequate employee training:

Another area of importance is multi-faceted wellness programs including a comprehensive employee assistance programs, training and educational opportunities during worktime like “Lunch and Learn” sessions. The training can focus on anything from local resources available to help care for an aging parent with dementia to navigating paperwork and benefits for an adult child with disabilities.

WFACSA encourages everyone to take time to thank a caregiver for their dedication and care of their loved ones on National Caregivers Day. Use #NationalCaregiversDay to post on social media.

The [Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance](#) mission is to raise awareness of family and caregiver support needs and increase the availability of and access to services and supports - both paid and unpaid - which will keep people across the lifespan engaged in their community as long as they desire. Learn more at <http://wisconsincaregiver.org/alliance>