



Caring for caregivers

A guide for employers

Why caregiver mental health is part of workplace wellbeing

Each May, Mental Health Awareness Month serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of emotional wellbeing – and this year, it provides a critical opportunity to recognize a group whose needs are often overlooked: caregivers. Whether supporting aging parents, children with special needs or loved ones navigating illness, caregivers shoulder extensive responsibilities that can profoundly impact their mental, emotional and physical health.

The role of a caregiver is one of deep commitment, compassion and resilience. Yet the demands placed on caregivers are immense. Many manage complex medical tasks, coordinate appointments, handle household needs and maintain employment – all while providing continuous emotional support to those who depend on them. This constant pressure can lead to significant challenges, including emotional strain, chronic stress and burnout. The weight of these responsibilities often brings feelings of isolation, especially when caregivers feel they must "hold it all together" without adequate support. For many, the absence of accessible resources or understanding from those around them intensifies the burden.

For employers, acknowledging the mental health needs of caregivers within their workforce is no longer optional – it is essential. A substantial portion of employees today balance caregiving with their professional responsibilities. When caregivers struggle, it influences not only their personal wellbeing but also their energy, engagement and productivity at work. By paying close attention to the caregiver experience, employers can foster a more compassionate, stable and high-performing workplace.



Sarah Wood
VP, Emerging Solutions

The benefits of providing meaningful wellbeing support are significant. Resources such as mental health services, flexible work options, caregiver focused benefits and proactive education can help reduce stress, prevent mental health challenges from escalating and create a culture in which employees feel seen and supported. When caregivers have access to tools that strengthen their emotional resilience, both they and their organizations thrive.

Thank you,

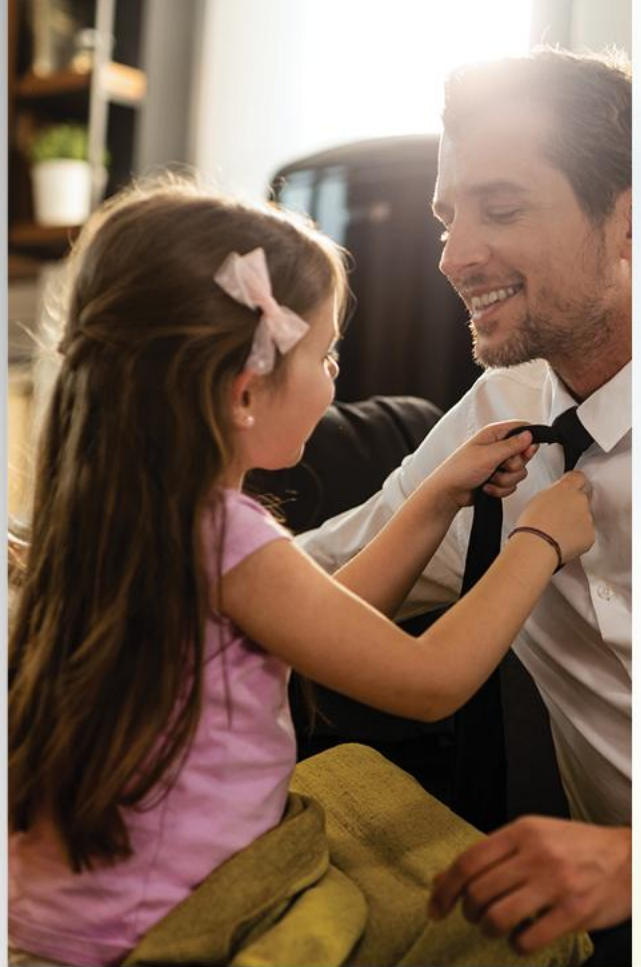
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Supporting caregiver mental health

Your organization's managers almost certainly know which of their team members have children at home, and benefit records can probably generate a report. But the parents on your staff are just one segment of your caregiving workforce. Employees who care for parents, partners or friends who are aging, infirm or disabled are typically less open about their caregiving roles and the challenges they face in balancing work and caring responsibilities. And, odds are, there are more of these "hidden" caregivers on your payroll than there are parents.

Who are the working caregivers?

A caregiver is anyone who provides support to a family member or someone they love: a child or teenager, an aging parent, an infirm spouse or partner, or a household member with a disability. Care for an adult might involve helping with bills or household tasks, running errands, taking them to medical appointments or ensuring round-the-clock supervision and support. The time commitment can range from a few minutes a week to many hours every day. Caregivers include men and women, and adults of all ages. One in every five adults in the U.S. is a caregiver, and the numbers are similar in Canada and the UK.^{1, 2, 3, 4}

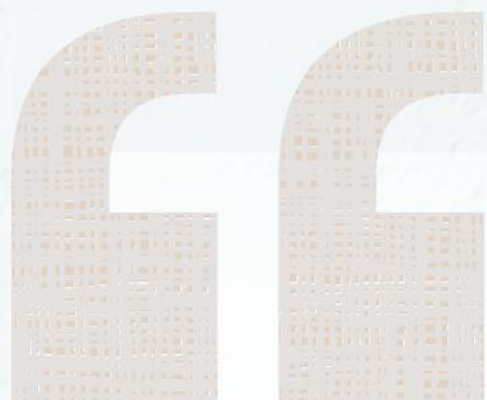


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2. Kilmer G., Omura J.D., Bouldin E.D., et al. (2024). Changes in health indicators among caregivers — United States, 2015–2016 to 2021–2022. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2024;73:740–746. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7334a2>

3. Silva-Ramirez, R., and Archambault, R. (2025). Profile of caregivers in Canada. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/corporate/reports/research/profile-caregivers-canada/research-report_profile-of-caregivers_en.pdf

4. CarersUK. (October 2025). Key facts and figures about caring. <https://www.carersuk.org/policy-and-research/key-facts-and-figures/>

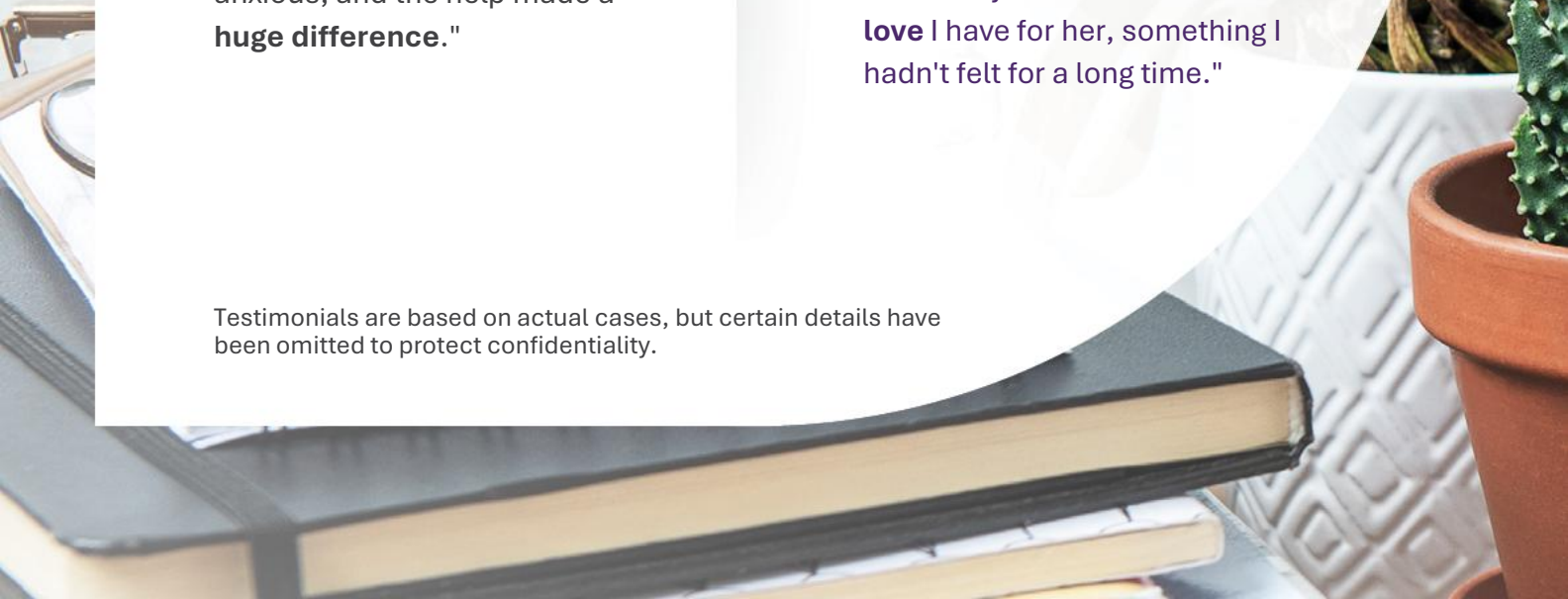


In their words

"I was worried about finding **childcare** that could properly support my children's **special needs** while I was away for cancer treatment. Of my three children, one is a **baby**, one is **autistic** and non-verbal, and the other has global **developmental delay**. The program helped me find a **childcare center and a nanny agency** that will meet our needs, and also helped me identify **sources of financial assistance**. I was extremely anxious, and the help made a **huge difference**."

"I love my **mother**, but I felt overwhelmed and saddened by how much **Alzheimer's** has changed our relationship. My reactions of annoyance were making the situation even more **difficult**. After several sessions with a program **counselor**, I've learned to remain **calm and patient**. I remember the moment when I was able to look into her eyes and still feel the **love** I have for her, something I hadn't felt for a long time."

Testimonials are based on actual cases, but certain details have been omitted to protect confidentiality.



Financial strain, social isolation and conflict with work requirements can add to the stress of caregiving.

The impact of caregiving on physical and mental health

Caregiving has many positive aspects. The supportive relationship can be rewarding for both the carer and the care recipient. Many caregivers report that the role is deeply satisfying, giving a sense of meaning to their lives.

But caregiving can also be felt as a burden, with negative impacts on physical and emotional health, especially when the relationship is strained, the person needing care has dementia or functional disabilities, and the duration and amount of care needed are high. Financial strain, social isolation and conflict with work requirements can add to the stress of caregiving. When compared with the non-caregivers, caregivers have significantly higher levels of

- stress
- anxiety
- depression
- emotional exhaustion

They also have higher incidences of hypertension, obesity, heart disease and other chronic conditions.⁵ Parents, too, experience the strain of caregiving. A 2023 U.S. government study found that 33 percent of parents report high levels of stress, compared with 22 percent of other adults. Almost twice as many parents as non-parents say that their stress is often completely overwhelming.⁶

Why caregivers' mental health matters for employers

While they may not be visible to managers and decision makers, caregivers make up an important part of almost every organization's workforce. One in every five full-time workers is a caregiver.⁷

Caregivers are present across diverse workforce demographics⁸:

- 40 percent are men.
- 24 percent are younger workers, between the ages of 18 and 34.⁹
- They're in high-paying and lower-paying jobs.

These caregivers' struggles, mental health challenges and time pressures affect the organization's productivity. More than half report having "frequently" or "sometimes" left work early, taken time off, or felt the quality or timeliness of their work suffered. Younger caregivers are more likely to report negative impacts on work performance and emotional wellbeing. When they feel they can't maintain the balance between work and caregiving, many leave – a loss to the organization of valuable skills and experience.¹⁰ Employers need the full contributions of all their employees, including caregivers, and there are important ways they can help.

5. Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS). (2020). The impact of caregiving on mental and physical health. <https://www.bcbs.com/news-and-insights/report/the-impact-of-caregiving-on-mental-and-physical-health>

6. Office of the Surgeon General. (2024). Parents under pressure: The U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the mental health and well-being of parents. <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/parents/index.html>

7. Harrington, E., McInturff, B. (September 2021). Working while caring: A national survey of caregiver stress in the U.S. workforce key findings. Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers. <https://rosalynncarter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/210140-RCI-National-Surveys-Executive-Summary-Update-9.22.21.pdf>

8. American Psychiatric Association (APA) Foundation Center for Workplace Health. (November 2024). Addressing the mental health needs of working caregivers: A resource guide. <https://workplacementalhealth.org/employer-resources/guides-and-toolkits/supporting-caregivers-in-the-workplace>

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What working caregivers need and how employers can support them

Caregivers can be invisible to their employers for several reasons:

- Firstly, **many don't identify themselves as caregivers.** They're sons or daughters, husbands or wives, partners or friends, doing what feels right to them in providing needed support. Ask them about caregiving, and they won't immediately think of themselves.
- They may **fear being open about priorities outside of work**, especially when they can be perceived as affecting work performance. Parents are generally comfortable talking about their children at work, but do so carefully when it might suggest less-than-full commitment to work. It's far less natural to talk about older or infirm family members with work colleagues.
- Finally, there's the **stigma that continues to surround mental health issues.** It's often neither comfortable nor safe to talk about feelings of stress, anxiety or depression at work.

Employers can address this invisibility in several ways:

- One is by conducting **employee surveys** or needs assessments to learn, anonymously, about the number of caregivers in the workforce, as well as their collective concerns and needs.
- Another, more difficult, is to **cultivate an environment of psychological safety** at work, where employees feel safe talking about mental health, priorities outside of work and work challenges, and where open discussions are encouraged.
- **Manager training** on mental health issues, **peer support programs**, **employee resource groups** and modeling of open conversations by leadership can help caregivers feel seen and heard at work, and more comfortable talking about their experiences and needs.

Balancing work and caregiving

The emotional stress of balancing work and caregiving is frequently cited by caregivers as their biggest challenge. They may feel frustrated when time constraints prevent them from taking on more challenging, interesting and higher-paid roles at work, or when rigid rules around where and when the work gets done make it difficult to perform both work and caregiving roles as well as they would like.

Employers can address these work-life balance issues by offering:

- **Flexible work schedules and remote or hybrid work options**, with clarity for managers and employees on how and when these options can be considered and how they should be monitored and adjusted over time.
- **Paid and unpaid leave options**, with the **ability to use them in small increments** or for longer breaks from work.





In their words

"My sister had been the **main caregiver** for our **Mom** but was now facing her own cancer diagnosis. I needed to take over my Mom's care but wasn't sure **where to begin** or **what resources were available**. It was a huge help to speak with an **elder care expert** and learn about options like **home care** and **meal delivery** services. I expect to rely on her as a **coach** as I navigate this change with my Mom."

"I didn't know how I could give my **father** the care he needs **at home** after his release from the hospital while still keeping up with my work and family obligations. An **elder care consultant** explained available support options, and I decided on a **home caregiver** and a **home health nurse**, which I found through an agency the program referred me to. I went from being very anxious, not knowing what to do, to **feeling in control** of the situation."

Testimonials are based on actual cases, but certain details have been omitted to protect confidentiality.

Help in navigating the practical and emotional complexities of caregiving

People who take on caregiving roles typically have little knowledge of the public support available to their loved ones or of how to recognize and respond to their loved ones' changing needs. They can also be surprised by the emotional toll of making decisions and sharing care with family members who don't always agree or get along. The relationship between the caregiver and the person needing care can also be fraught with history or the changes infirmity or dementia can bring.

Employers can help caregivers by providing ready access to care guidance and mental health support through an effective employee assistance program (EAP) with country-specific elder care, disability and health care system expertise. Because working caregivers are squeezed for time, access to this support should be immediate whenever the caregiver is able to reach out for help.

How we can help caregivers and employers

Our **employee wellbeing program** provides emotional support and mental health counseling for caregivers, as well as information on care options, ranging from childcare to home care and support services for older adults, individuals who are infirm or adults with disabilities. Our **care coaching** includes mental health counseling, life coaching, care coaching and **work-life resources** and information.

We also offer **case management support** to ensure that families receive guidance in reviewing their clinical needs and making informed decisions. To equip your organization to better support caregivers, we provide consulting services related to workforce management and training. This includes education for your employees that enables them to take care of aging parents, navigate parental and caregiver leave and thrive as parents and caregivers.



Connect with our team to discuss our caregiver programs or other wellbeing programs for employees in your organization!



The background features a light-colored grid pattern. A large circular inset on the left shows a close-up of a person's hands, with one hand resting on the other. The person is wearing a light blue shirt. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional.

In their words

"My **father** has **dementia** and requires **round-the-clock care**. I was sleep-deprived and having **difficulty** finding time for peace. My health and social life had deteriorated, and I was **feeling very low**. The counselor encouraged me to talk about my feelings and listened in a way that I felt **heard and cared for**. She helped me learn **stress management** techniques and suggested journaling as a way to express what I was going through. The program's **elder care team** then helped me find **support services** that I **could afford**."

Testimonials are based on actual cases, but certain details have been omitted to protect confidentiality.