



Supporting Employees with Child Care Needs During COVID-19 & Beyond: Six Tips for Businesses

Impact of COVID-19

According to the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#), the current concerns about child care are causing families to make tough decisions about their employment. Their decisions will then impact businesses' overall success if employees are unable or unwilling to return to work.

Additional Supporting Resources:

[Katherine B. Stevens. Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High-Quality Childcare. June 2017](#)

[The Business Case for Investing in High-Quality Child Care](#)

Finding high-quality child care has been a struggle for parents and families for a long time. It is an even greater issue now, given the coronavirus pandemic. Parents who previously had a child care provider for their child may be searching for a new one due to programs closing and other related factors. Here is a brief list of ways that you as a business owner can support your employees' child care needs during COVID-19 and beyond.

1. Give employees time off or flex time to find quality care.

To make informed choices about child care, it's important for families to visit prospective programs—to check out the environment, meet the staff, and get a sense of what their child's experiences will be like while in care and how the program partners with families. Many times the hours during which child care programs offer tours or are available for discussions with families fall during parents' working hours.

- If your business offers time off or flex time, it could eliminate the requirement that employees either take off the entire day or use leave to visit child care programs. This is especially supportive of new employees who may not have had a chance to build up paid leave. This shouldn't be done in a way that looks like parents with children are getting special treatment. Instead, it could be positioned as a change in your organizational policies due to the "new normal" of COVID-19 realities, including limited child care options.
- Create a flex time bucket for all employees, which gives them a certain number of extra hours (paid time and not PTO) that they can use for family needs during COVID-19.
- Conduct a survey among your employees to learn what their needs are. This will help guide you in any scheduling or time off adjustments that you may be considering.

2. Consider ways that you can assist your employees with financial support for the cost of child care.

Think about ways that you can partner with your employees to support their child care needs. Even parents who get some type of child care voucher subsidy often still have a copay they're responsible for and other costs for things like enrollment and field trip fees.

- Many parents do not qualify for child care subsidies, based on their income. They earn too much to qualify for child care subsidies, but not enough to cover the full cost of child care on their own. A great way that you as an employer can assist them is by leveraging tax-free plans such as a Flexible Spending Account (FSA).
- A Flexible Spending Account (FSA) will allow your employees to save and use pre-tax money from their income to pay for child care. There are many reasons [Why Every Employer Should Have FSA in 2020](#), but it boils down to showing employees that you care about them as a whole person and not just because of the work they perform. This mindset will support your staff retention rates and overall staff morale.

3. Partner with your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R) and bring experts on site to support employees who are searching for quality child care options.

CCR&Rs are an underutilized, free resource that deserves your attention. Your local CCR&R can be a great support to you as a business owner in many ways.

- One key way is that their staff can come on site and guide your employees through the process of finding quality child care. They can help your staff identify high-quality child care providers in your area, and where they are located in relation to your business and/or the family home.
- If you are unsure who your local CCR&R agency is, you can use the [CCR&R Search](#) tool on the CCAoA website to assist you. CCR&Rs can not only support your employees with child care information, but also inform them of financial assistance programs in your area.



4. Help to support child care costs through partnerships with local high-quality child care programs and stay current on local child care offerings in your area.

There are many ways to consider partnering with local child care providers in your community.

- Find out who the local high-quality providers in your area are and offer to subsidize a tuition discount for employees who enroll their children in these high-quality programs. In most cases this works out to be a win-win situation. Your employees benefit from assistance and the child care programs receive referrals from you for your staff with child care needs.
- Leverage your local CCR&R agency to help keep you current on the availability of child care in your area. You could then use that list to work with local child care programs to see if they are open and possibly financially assist them to remain open or re-open, thus increasing the capacity of child care in your area. This will allow you to understand what is happening in your local region as far as resources for families and which child care providers are accepting children.
- You can use that information to send out a weekly or daily communication to your employees, sharing with them some of the resources and information you learned. Due to the ever-changing response to COVID-19, it is good to remember to consistently check that you're providing the most current data.

5. Advocate for the importance of high-quality child care in your community.

As a business leader, you can advocate for additional child care funding to reduce the burden on families in the workforce with young children. The cost of high-quality care can be high, and some parents have to settle for lesser care because that's what they can afford. This should not be the case.

- Reach out to your state and local representatives, and federal policymakers, and raise your concerns as a tax-paying business owner.
- If your staff has access to affordable, high-quality child care, those employees are able to come to work and contribute to your company goals without being distracted by child care worries.
- Parents who do not have adequate care for their child are more likely to miss work or – in worst-case scenarios – even quit their jobs to care for their children. There can be no true workforce recovery without child care. Access the Advocacy page on the [CCAOA website](#) to support you in understanding what you can do and where to start.

6. Stay current on federal government updates pertaining to child care.

Utilizing federal resources that are available to you and your employees can support the overall health of your business and enhance employees' access to high quality child care.

- Monitor federal government stimulus funding developments and regulations for decisions that impact your payroll practices.
- Watch information shared out from the federal government for new incentives for business owners who provide child care assistance to employees and stabilizing business supports that may benefit your bottom line. Your local U.S. Chamber of Commerce may be a good source of ongoing information; consider getting on their email distribution list.