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Care Providers Make Return to Work Possible

Across the country, cities are working hard to ensure that their staff is safe and able to meet the challenges caused by COVID-19. As cities begin to reopen, ensuring the workforce can be present is an important part of meeting the needs of residents. Cities of all sizes have workers that are caregivers and these individuals need to know that their loved ones are safe in order to be as effective as possible.

The early childhood community has answered the call to provide high quality childcare options for essential personnel across the country. Just like other business sectors, this workforce is gearing up to meet the needs of their community, but will need assistance and thoughtful partnership to quickly meet the need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put additional strains on family units, and as many workers are caring for loved ones, local governments and employers will want to consider expanding beyond childcare options to caregiving broadly. AARP reported that before the COVID-19 pandemic **41 million Americans** were providing caregiver services, of which **60%** were also working full time. This is a very important consideration for municipal leaders as their employees may be juggling these personal responsibilities.

Below are several steps that city administrators can take now to help these individuals meet the needs of the municipal workforce:

Develop a better understanding of who on staff needs caregiving services:

- Review Flexible Spending Account (FSA) deduction records** for those paying for dependent care (children, childcare sign-up lists or waitlists, custodial care of an adult dependent, etc.).
- Connect with caregiving providers** that the city might have contracts with to determine availability.
- Connect with union representatives** to confirm who from their membership is accessing care or planning to access care once the city reopens.
- Ask staff if their caregiving needs have changed** (children, parents, family members with ranging ability needs, etc.) – ask the full staff list, as circumstances may have changed as a result of COVID-19.

- Review company Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Expanded Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) benefits**, and ensure employees are aware of these benefits.

Connect with your city staff members that work directly with center and home-based care providers, local care resources, referral agencies or your employee assistance program provider to better understand the care landscape of your community:

- Confirm which providers are operating** (hours of operation, location, availability, etc.) and if they have any PPE or basic supply needs.
 - If possible, create a needs list of supplies for these providers, ensure availability and determine accessibility for care providers to these resources in partnership with the community (i.e. grocers, local chamber of commerce, or school district).
- Confirm updated licensing requirements** have been articulated to care providers.
- Create a list of family care and center-based providers** that are operating and can take on more children, parents, and family members with ranging ability needs.

Share information with city staff:

- By email, through virtual staffing meetings, and via labor unions.
- Add this information to your city staff COVID-19 page.

Consider supporting staff and care providers directly:

- Start or expand a tuition assistance program** that would support the cost of care for city staff.
- Make sure that care providers are aware** of the city's small business support services.
- Ensure providers have access to PPE** and clear guidelines for ensuring safety.

Resources:

- [How Childcare Can Make Returning to Work Possible](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Guidance for Child Care Programs](#)
- [City of Madison Child Care Tuition Assistance Program](#): Financial assistance is available to Madison residents who are ineligible for the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program and meet the City of Madison eligibility requirements.
- Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies [search](#) webpage for those that want to know more about their local childcare provider landscape.
- United States Office of Personnel Management Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) [Options for Telework-Eligible Employees With Caregiving Responsibilities](#)
- Society for Human Resource Management [COVID-19 Reveals the Value of Caregiving Benefits](#)
- American Association of Retired Persons [Caregiving While Working](#)