

CODRE/COSW Campus Wide Listening Session # 14
“Supporting Caregiving Employees at UofL”
March 23, 2023

What we heard

What is working.

- Offices that are not short-staffed can provide more flexibility.
- Some feel that UofL is more flexible than previous employers, are lucky with their flexibility for both childcare, and family/elder care.
- Amount of vacation and leave, shared vacation/sick time
- Specific supervisors are great about flexibility.
- Parenting Network (ERG)
- EAP (although mixed feelings about this)
- Faculty tenure process is straightforward, easier to know where you stand.
- Leadership that models appropriate balance, use of leave, etc.

Consistency

- Desire for policies to be more consistent, clearly articulated.
- Inconsistency between departments/units and discretion of individual managers leads to frustration.
- differences in access to flexibility even among people with similar roles.
- More consistent & explicit availability of flexible/remote work for people whose jobs allow it – not leaving it up to supervisor discretion.
- FMLA restrictions on who “counts” for family care responsibilities (not just a UofL issue)

Flexibility

- If you can do your job remotely, should be allowed to do so automatically during school closures.
- With school times changing/varying, need for flexibility with work hours.

Stigma/Guilt

- Feel pulled in multiple directions, like there is stigma that will prevent career growth.
- Guilt of taking off when you have care responsibilities (sick child, etc.) - hard to combat on a personal level, but it shouldn't come from supervisors.
- If you're making a reasonable request, you should be able to just make your request and it should be listened to. Not feel like you are overly pleading/explaining.
- Career goals shouldn't require you to go above and beyond your regular work hours.
- Elder care responsibilities are often overlooked in conversations.
- Take advantage of grievance and appeal processes if you are being denied something reasonable – although that process is work as well.
 - Be proactive about using things like EAP, time off – don't wait until you are completely drowning.
 - Ask for help in general – your personal networks, in your unit, etc. People do want to help generally.
 - Sharing accommodations that they were given – people don't always know what they can ask for.

Financial Barriers

- Better pay would help with almost everything.
 - many are paid below poverty line. Relying on spouses with higher incomes to make things manageable. Often these roles are gender-coded which is part of why pay is low.
- Early Learning Center (ELC)– very long wait list and expensive application fee to even get on the list.
- Paid parental leave of 6 weeks is not enough, insurance rates are very high for family plans, dependent care FSA is not enough.
- Given how hard it is to get into the ELC, it would be nice if there were discounts available for other ELC programs. Apparently, KinderCare does offer a discount, this wasn't well known.
- ELC also isn't particularly convenient for HSC employees (although some do use it)
- Provide appropriate technology for everyone to work remotely so that caregiving employees can work from home without relying on personal devices (although bookstore does offer payroll deduction)

Caregivers bring these skills, talents, and strengths to their work at UofL

- Multi-tasking
- Efficiency
- Time-management, negotiation
- Flexibility
- Project-management
- Policymaking
- Empathy
- Loyalty (when it is returned by employer)
- Adaptability
- Logistics
- Creativity

Recommendations

- Policies need to be clearly restated when relevant (ahead of election day, time off allowed to vote, etc.)
- Until policies and benefits are expanded, just making sure that the existing resources are visible & well-known.
- More consistent & explicit availability of flexible/remote work for people whose jobs allow it – not leaving it up to supervisor discretion.
- Flex time and working non-traditional schedules can be very beneficial to students – we have adult, non-traditional, and online students who would prefer hours outside of traditional office hours.
- Reducing 1-year wait time after starting at university until eligibility for many things like shared leave, FMLA.
- Expand the ELC and add a location that would help with the HSC Campus. (use it as a working/learning outlet for school of education students as part of their practicum)
 - it's frustrating that you can't have ELC tuition automatically deducted from your paycheck.
- encourage job-sharing? This is a good solution that is used elsewhere. For example, team-teaching or advising.
 - Include percentage of remote eligibility or something similar in job descriptions
- Better promote that the Trager Institute caregiver program is free.
 - Workshops/presentations on different topics for caregivers

- webspaces that include a full list of caregiving resources.
- Trainings for males/partners of caregivers about responsibility sharing to promote more equal balance in households.
- In-person support meetings for caregivers
- Self-care is very important
- Keep caregivers informed of what happens with this feedback. Follow up with what changes occur because of this feedback.
- Expand parental leave, bereavement leave.
- Elder law clinic at Brandeis Law School – does have an income cap of 2.5 times poverty level.
 - Access to legal services for writing wills, etc – we have this but isn't well known or understood, could be expanded.
 - Perhaps we could offer a legal clinic specifically for employees.
- Fertility/adoption/surrogacy benefits – HR is exploring.
- Additional flexibility for pumping employees
- Better promotion of donating shared vacation/sick time (acknowledging teams and colleges that do that could see that certainly as a community of care type of award)
- General subsidy/benefit program for childcare