

ELDER CAREGIVING

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As the number of frail elderly in the population continues to climb, employers may want to devote additional attention to their employees' elder caregiving responsibilities.

Question 1: Is it common for older workers to have responsibilities to care for an elderly family member, relative or friend?

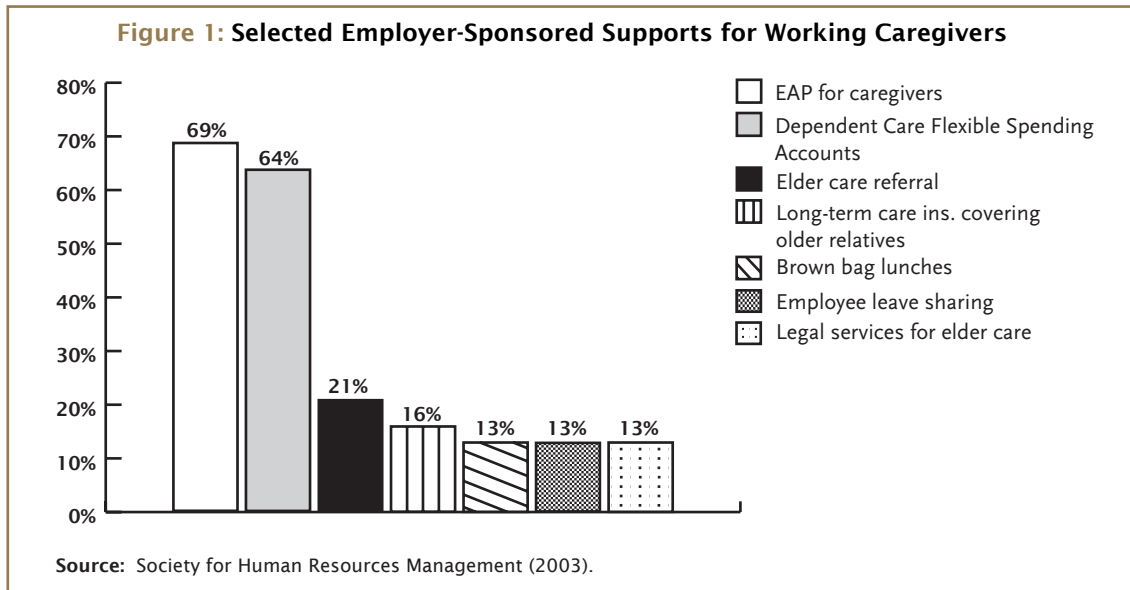
- "Among adults age 51 or older more than one in ten are providing assistance with basic everyday activities to their parents." 12% are the primary caregiver. (Center on an Aging Society, 2005: 2). [Editors note: *Not all of the caregivers in this study were in the labor force.*]
- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of all caregivers aged 51-64 are employed, and 75% of those who are primary caregivers work full-time (40 or more hours per week) (Center on an Aging Society, 2005: 4).
- Analyses of the National Study of the Changing Workforce suggest that approximately 16.7% of the workforce has responsibility for elder care over the course of a single year. (Pitt-Catsoupes, 2006).
- In 2004, "35% of Boomers have been or are responsible for the care of their elderly parent, up nine points since 1998." (AARP, 2004: 8) [Editors note: *Not all of the respondents to this survey were in the labor force.*]

Question 2: Which groups of people are most likely to provide elder care?

- "Among women and men of all ages, women ages 50 to 64 are the group most likely to be caring for sick and disabled family members. Nearly one in five (18%) of these women report being a caregiver--a rate two and a half times higher than reported by women 19 to 29." (The Commonwealth Fund, 2005: 2).

Question 3: What do employers do to help their employees fulfill their elder care responsibilities?

- According to the *2003 Eldercare Survey* conducted by Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), "only 6% of respondents said that their organization has a specific policy or policies addressing eldercare issues. This number is even smaller than the 25% who offer eldercare benefits--the discrepancy implies that many eldercare policies, even where offered, are informal." However, "almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) allow employees to use eldercare benefits to care for a parent, and over half to care for the parent of a legal spouse." (Society for Human Resource Management, 2003: 1, 5).
- According to the *2003 Eldercare Survey* conducted by Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), "11% of respondents indicated that their organization trains managers to understand and deal with employee eldercare issues. In other words, nearly 9 out of 10 respondents stated that their organization does not specifically train managers in these issues. Because eldercare is such a private issue, and with employees of different generations heading up departments, understanding eldercare issues is an important management skill." (Society for Human Resource Management, 2003: 8).



Question 4: How do eldercare responsibilities affect employees who are providing the care?

- According to the *2003 Eldercare Survey* conducted by Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), “eldercare issues indicate a negative impact on an employee’s productivity even when he or she is physically present in the office. Forty-four percent of respondents report workday interruptions as a result of eldercare issues; 41% report mental/concentration problems; and 37% report excessive personal phone calls/business during work hours.” (Society for Human Resource Management, 2003: 6).

Question 5: Do employer-sponsored eldercare supports produce any business results?

- “... employer-provided elder care assistance programs increase the average retirement age of men by eight months, while the same programs increase the average retirement age of women by only one month.” (Mulvey, J., Nyce, S., Clark, L. R., & Mitchell, S. O., 2004: 15).
- Among the HR respondents to the *2003 Eldercare Survey* conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 42% of the respondents agreed, and 5% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement “providing eldercare resources and benefits to employees helps recruit and retain employees.” (Society for Human Resource Management, 2003: 7).

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