

**Future of (How We) Work Task Force**  
**Meeting #5: Childcare 8/11/2020**  
**Notes**

**How do we support caregivers and create a culture that normalizes the need to take care of our families?**

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, employers and employees scrambled as we all adjusted to working from home. Now that we are five months into this crisis and an end doesn't appear to be near, we are transitioning from scrambling to planning, and one of our biggest challenges is how to support caregivers and create a culture that normalizes the need to take care of our families. At our fifth Future of (How We) Work Task Force meeting, we heard from leaders at four organizations about how they are approaching this challenge and spent time in small groups brainstorming ideas and solutions.

This issue disproportionately impacts women and addressing these challenges is critical to making sure that we don't backslide against the progress we have made. While no one has all the answers on how to solve this problem right now, the goal of our meeting was to create dialogue, and exchange and spark new ideas so that we all can take steps in the right direction.

**Discussion Highlights:**

- It is great that there are so many organizations in Kendall that are able to address this issue for their employees. However, we should remember that there are many organizations that either lack the will or resources to do the same. It is important that we use our position of privilege to advocate for improvements beyond our own companies.
- Mitigating stigma and coaching employees on self-advocacy are critical to the success of any of these programs.
- After nearly six months of working from home, the major challenge for caregivers is at-home learning. School-aged children may need additional support from parents when at-home learning begins, and with school policies in flux, those demands might change day to day.
- It is critical to emphasize what *is* possible rather than what is not.
- Creating a culture of empathy around this is also important as other groups of employees who do not have children may not understand the challenges and can feel frustrated or left out.

Employers are adopting strategies to support employees' caregiving needs in four ways: shifting culture, direct financial support, time and flexibility, and through new benefits.

### **Shifting Culture:**

- Creating visibility from leadership about managing these challenges is an important way to raise awareness and normalize caregiving in your culture.
- Part of creating a culture that normalizes caregiving is providing tools to managers to help them navigate these new conversations.

### **Time & Flexibility:**

- Many employers have started offering coaching on time management and other practices that enable better boundaries and communication -- including marking childcare or school time on the calendar.
- Employers have enabled maximum flexibility in work schedules allowing employees to adopt a schedule that works best for them.
- Some employers have increased paid leave specifically for caregiving during COVID-19 including a certain number of days per child to support “back to school” and other creative ideas.
- Teams have been encouraged to adopt common practices around scheduling -- having recurring days without meetings, or team-wide calendaring practices.

### **New Benefits Programs:**

- Many employers have expanded benefits to provide support for in-person childcare, new virtual childcare programs, and tutoring for school-aged children. Some providers that were discussed include: Care.com, SitterStream, and Tutor.com.
- In order to avoid stigma, some employers have rolled all of their new benefits into one “COVID-19 crisis response package” including increased mental health support, caregiving support, and increased paid time off and flexibility.
- Some employers also have been able to offer in-person childcare at their worksite.

### **Financial Support:**

- Understanding that childcare and tutoring costs are now much higher than before, some employers have offered a cash benefit to caregivers.