



Three Strategies To Manage Child Care Issues

business customers human resources employees

Summary: During the pandemic, child care has become a major issue, as child care facilities closed or were given strict limits. We provide three strategies to assist for a smooth transition back to the office.

Many of us have heard that young kids can't remember a lot before age 3. This is called "infantile amnesia" because the hippocampus (in charge of episodic memories) is not fully developed until after 3Ys old. From then on, they learn and grow quickly. Yet, the current pandemic has shifted some of their learning environments quite a bit.

Limited child care has become a serious issue as workers try to return to the workplace. A recent Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia survey found that nearly half of the manufacturers in that region had difficulties recalling furloughed workers or hiring new ones in August due to problems with employees finding child care providers. Many of these providers have either closed or needed to reduce the number of children because of their state's public-health regulations. Thus, the availability of child care has declined substantially in many areas and has affected other geographic areas and even small businesses.

Forty percent of the businesses surveyed by the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation said they had concerns that some workers who were working from home earlier this year won't completely return to work due to health worries and child care challenges. Furthermore, some might ask for reduced hours or the ability to continue working remotely.

Knowing this is a difficult situation for both your customers and potentially your employees, how can your community financial institution help both in this situation? Consider these strategies for your teams or your business customers, to increase engagement and productivity, and reduce absenteeism.

- 1. Partner with organizations that provide back-up child care.** Financial institutions and other companies are contracting with organizations like Bright Horizons Family Solutions Inc. to provide back-up care when employees' regular child care providers are unavailable. Bright Care also provides virtual-learning centers, where children use laptops to do schoolwork and in-person teachers monitor their progress. As the pandemic drags on, employers are extending the time period that eligible employees can use these services.
- 2. Host child care providers and tutors in your own facilities.** Some companies are providing in-house daycare centers that also employ tutors for children taking online classes. Working parents at one company are taking turns overseeing their children's online classes in the company's conference room.
- 3. Provide financial assistance for alternative child care and tutoring services.** Some companies are increasing their reimbursements for child care and discounts for test preparation and tutoring services. The HR director of one financial institution explains why it's so critical to provide these services, because if they have a child care crisis within their workforce, *"we're not going to be able to have productive employees and teammates who can do their jobs. It's just one of the most important things."*

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