

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

# Help Caregivers Stay Healthy: The Rising Concerns/Costs Associated with Young Caregivers

Many employers overlook the need to address end-of-life issues in the workplace. However, these issues affect their employees who serve as caregivers to ailing family members. Additionally, the expansion of the family to four generations has resulted I a new population of caregivers to elderly members. Young adults, aged 40 years and younger, are now commonly serving as the major source of support to older relatives (Hogstel, Curry, & Walker, 2006).

Not addressing employers who are caring for a loved one costs employers' workers' productivity, absenteeism, and unexpected monetary expenses. The estimated lost productivity of working caregivers was determined to be $17.1 billion-$33.6 billion per year along with increased costs incurred through medical and disability expenses (Pawlecki, 2010). Moreover, the emotional burden of an employee facing a terminal illness or death of a loved one can be expressed with sadness, anger, decreased concentration, numbness, sleep disturbance, and fatigue to name a few. Although some research has suggested that caregivers reduce their work hours to meet their caregiving demands, the latest evidence suggests that caregivers are much more likely to leave their job entirely (Colombo et al., 2011).

It is important to highlight to employers the extent to which end-of-life issues affect productivity and emotional well-being in the workforce. Potential options to address end-of-life issues for employees include:

- Training managers to assist employees in need
- Monitoring the costs of end-of-life challenges
- Providing end-of-life resources for employees who are caring for a loved one
- Flexible work hours for caregivers so they can attend to their loved ones

Research indicates that caregivers consistently feel their caregiving contributions are ignored by society. They have indicated that a small amount of recognition from employers could help them feel more satisfied about their work and less abandoned (Lilly, 2007). Your employee assistance program (EAP) is a great resource for ways to incorporate initiatives for employees who are caring for a loved one.

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