

Caring Workplace Practices: A Catalog for Nonprofit Human Services Organizations

Report No. 3

Helping our paid and volunteer staff succeed on the job, at home, and in the community can pay dividends to our nonprofit human services organizations. Namely, such *Caring Workplace* practices can reduce turnover, attract talent, and enhance performance.

Introduction

Caring Workplaces, Committed Employees practices aim to support and enhance employee and volunteer commitment to our organizations and the children, youth, families, and communities we serve—including “our own”—the family members of our staff. *Caring Workplaces* is about providing “good jobs” that help us attract, keep, and develop a talented workforce that can serve others while caring for their families and themselves.

This catalog of *Caring Workplace* practices offers nonprofit human services organizations a menu of ways to enhance support for paid and volunteer staff who have family responsibilities, especially dependent children. Because many nonprofits have limited means, the catalog provides low-cost options for helping staff and volunteers succeed.

With input from employees and volunteers, your nonprofit can use this catalog to:

High ROI for Investing in Low-Wage Employees

A common, but incorrect, assumption is that there is no business case for investing in the quality of low-paying jobs. Research from the Families and Work Institute indicates otherwise. As summarized by FWI president and co-founder Ellen Galinsky:

“There has been an understandable focus on providing good workplaces for top and pipeline talent, but our reports show that *employers get, in many instances, more of an impact if they also provide this kind of good workplace to their entry-level employees.*” [emphasis added]

Source: Families and Work Institute, 11/1/06, press release.

- Recognize and promote the many ways your organization is already a *Caring Workplace*.
- Select *Caring Workplace* improvements that are within your means and respond to paid and volunteer staff needs. Ideally, your targeted *Caring*

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Workplace practices would be integrated into your workforce development plan for enhancing staff commitment and performance and advancing the organization's goals.

- Initiate a dialogue with your affiliates or service networks about steps they can take to care for their “own” that would also improve retention, engagement, and recruitment.

Including Volunteers in our Caring Workplaces

Volunteers, not just employees, must be part of our attention to build or enhance *Caring Workplaces* because:

- Our sector has a long tradition of engaging volunteers in service delivery and community development, a partnership that can expand as baby boomers retire.
- The inclusion of volunteers recognizes that the historic boundaries between employment and volunteer service are blurring, as is the case with AmeriCorps members and Senior Companions who receive stipends and some insurance coverage. In addition, many nonprofits have the experience of volunteers eventually joining their paid staff or of retiring employees who come back to volunteer.
- By caring for volunteers, we expand our total talent pool.
- Volunteers are an essential part of our workforce, yet we don't always think of volunteers as staff. This may explain why we have often unintentionally shortchanged volunteers by not being deliberate in promoting their wellbeing and providing support for their family responsibilities. Many nonprofits do provide informal assistance, but the impact of these piecemeal efforts is significantly less than a sustained investment can yield.

- Finally, we can look to volunteers to help us enrich our organizational support for all staff.

Without much effort or additional cost, nonprofit organizations can increase their support for volunteers and for their family responsibilities by opening up programs and services that may currently be available only to employees. For example, higher value volunteers can be invited to join worksite seminars on financial education, health, and wellness topics or obtain referrals from agency staff.

The catalog includes many emerging practices that span human resources and volunteer management to make volunteering more possible. An underlying framework is that our support for volunteers and their families can be focused on regular, ongoing volunteers (e.g., youth mentors or peer counselors) who provide many hours of valuable service for free. Intermittent volunteers could be a second priority with the aim of nurturing their commitment to serving our clients and communities.

Structure of this Catalog

The next section describes the *Caring Workplaces, Committed Employees* initiative of which this catalog is a product. We then describe who might be most vulnerable in your workforce and would benefit from *Caring Workplace* policies and practices. Because positive outcomes depend on good planning and implementation, the catalog suggests guiding principles and presents the Family and Work Institute's effective workplace framework. The actual catalog of practices follows after a quick summary of our selection process.

About this Initiative

Caring Workplaces, Committed Employees is a yearlong initiative by the National Human Services Assembly's Family Strengthening Policy Center (FSPC), with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The goal is to advance the nonprofit human services sector's adoption of workplace policies, practices, and cultures that strengthen working families, especially those that have dependent children and/or low incomes.

The Center is particularly focused on low-income families with children because research shows that:

- Investing in the wellbeing of lower paid staff (including part-time and hourly workers) can produce a greater return on investment for employers than similar measures for top and pipeline staff.¹ (See High ROI for Investing in Low-Wage Employees textbox on page 1.)
- Flexible scheduling and fringe benefits not only reduce absences, but also improve job retention, work effort, and employee engagement and commitment to their employer.^{1,2,3}
- Flexibility and fringe benefits—especially paid medical and vacation leave, employer-sponsored health and insurance plans, and flexible scheduling—contribute to family wellbeing and stability. These “good job” features are particularly helpful to lower income families who have fewer resources to manage both everyday problems and large challenges that can interfere with work.
- Socioeconomic disparities in opportunities and barriers have produced generations of children and families at the lower end of the economic ladder who do not escape their disadvantages. Too many young people enter adulthood unprepared for college, work, and life. The consequence, from an employer's perspective, is a future workforce that is less equipped to succeed at their job.⁴

(To learn more about the connection between workplace practices, employee and volunteer productivity and retention, and family stability, please read our short report, [Low Quality Jobs Can Be Costly for Employers, Families](#).

More Resources for *Caring Workplaces, Committed Employees*

In addition to this catalog of *Caring Workplace* practices, the FSPC's ***Caring Workplaces, Committed Employees Online Resource Center*** offers a growing set of materials to help nonprofit human services employers enhance their workplaces in ways that strengthen working families.

- *Caring Workplace case study featuring NeighborWorks® America*
- *Resource Guide for Nonprofit Human Services Organizations*
- *Fact sheet on challenges faced by low-income working families*

The following resources are in development and will be available in the second half of 2008.

- Additional case studies
- Business case statement for *Caring Workplace* policies and practices

To access the *Caring Workplaces, Committed Employees Online Resource Center*, go to: <http://www.nassembly.org/fspc/CaringWorkplaceInitiative/index.html>.

Vulnerable Staff, and Families, within our Organizations

While our sector has a solid track record in making a difference in the lives of the children, youth, families, and communities we serve, we may not be doing everything we can to strengthen disadvantaged people, and their families, *within* our organizations. For example, do our employees and volunteers have ready access to the services that we provide to the community?

Almost all nonprofit human services organizations have lower paid staff who could benefit from increased organizational support for their family and personal lives. These at-risk staff in lower level or frontline positions might be our:

- Youth services workers or case managers.
- Community organizers or outreach workers.
- Volunteers from disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- Paraprofessionals such as nursing aides, child care providers, case aides, and van drivers.
- Administrative assistants and receptionists.
- Food bank or residential facility staff.
- School-based advisors and family support workers.
- ...and many others.

In addition, life circumstances can render *any* staff vulnerable. Our organizations have staff who are strained caregivers for spouses and aging parents, volunteers who may be victims of domestic violence, welfare leavers hit hard by rising grocery and fuel costs, grandparents raising children, young adults starting their careers, and coworkers receiving a devastating diagnosis or going through a foreclosure, to name a few.

A *Caring Workplace* seeks to support paid and volunteer staff with managing their family and community responsibilities. Nearly all of these practices transcend stage of life and have the ability to help all staff fulfill their potential.

Guiding Principles

FSPC recommends that nonprofit agencies apply the following principles in adopting *Caring Workplace* practices in order to increase the odds for success.

- A. Employees and volunteers help select, develop, and implement *Caring Workplace* practices. Assistance for lower income employees and for volunteers is a priority, as these groups are often overlooked.
- B. As feasible, policies and programs extend across occupations, stages of life, and positions (exempt, non-exempt, voluntary) so that all staff have improved ability to fulfill their potential at work, at home, and in the community. A stretch goal is the inclusion of part-time and seasonal workers in these practices whenever possible.
- C. Agency leaders reinforce *Caring Workplace* policies by shaping the organizational culture to systemically support families, by training managers, and by communicating with all staff.
- D. As resources permit, *Caring Workplace* practices are assessed for impact on employees and volunteers, the workplace, and agency outcomes, with the expectation that some benefits will take several years to materialize. If a formal evaluation is out of reach, free self-assessment tools can be used.^a The assessment results can monitor progress in enhancing workplace support or help make the case for new or expanded *Caring Workplace* practices.
- E. In implementing *Caring Workplace* practices, the employer respects staff members' privacy.
- F. *Caring Workplace* practices should enhance working conditions and benefits for paid and volunteer staff; they are not intended to make amends for reductions in compensation or fringe benefits.

FSPC also recommends following a workforce plan that integrates *Caring Workplace* practices. According to Cornerstones for Kids, the benefits of workforce planning make it well worth the effort. Workforce planning “provides a systematic process for understanding the workforce at a level of detail that will ensure that decisions are made using the best data, and that these decisions will support the mission, values and direction of the agency.”⁵ Cornerstones for Kids offers a free, comprehensive workforce planning portal that is helping human services organizations improve their workforce and reduce turnover (<http://portal.cornerstones4kids.org>).

Effective Workplace Framework

The Family and Work Institute's (FWI) effective workplace framework can be useful in structuring your organization's *Caring Workplace* approach. As described by FWI, *effective workplaces are ones that simultaneously increase employee responsibility and accountability while providing more support to employees*. The FWI effective workplace framework draws up research-based drivers of employee effectiveness. Effective workplaces give employees at all levels more:

- Job autonomy.
- Involvement in management decision-making.^b
- Flexibility.
- Accountability.¹

a Several tools are identified in the *Caring Workplaces Culture* section of this catalog or our *Resource Guide for Nonprofit Human Services Organizations* publication, which is available online (www.nassembly.org/fspc).

b FWI describes this as managers “actively seek[ing] out information and new ideas from employees at all levels of the organization to guide their decision making.”¹

To promote employee success with these new responsibilities (listed above), employers provide more support, namely:

- Learning opportunities on the job.
- (Formal) education and training programs to enhance competencies.
- Supervisor and co-worker support for both:
 - Job success.
 - Managing work, personal, and family life.
- Trustworthy front-line managers.
- Enhanced fringe benefits and flexibility.
- Work-life culture that is supportive of personal and family life.¹

Figure 1 illustrates the envisioned partnership.

FIGURE 1.
Framework for Effective Workplaces,
Families and Work Institute



Outcomes Most Important Employers

Increased responsibility, coupled with accountability and support at work, translates into effective workers. On average, staff in effective workplaces have characteristics that top their employer's list of important outcomes:

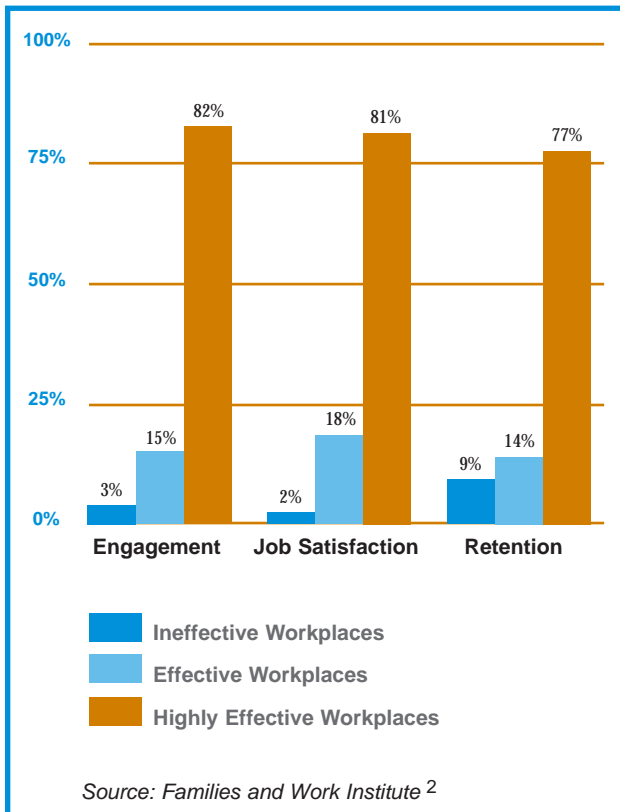
- **Satisfied with their jobs.**
- **Committed to their employers.**
- **Productive.**
- **Likely to be retained.**

Source: Families and Work Institute¹

Effective Workplaces Have Positive Outcomes.

Effective workplaces benefit both employees and employers, including the four outcomes that are most important to employers because they help build a positive bottom line. Specifically, FWI reports that “When workers are given more responsibility, are accordingly held accountable and are supported at work, they are more effective workers—more satisfied with their jobs, more committed to their employers, potentially more productive, and more likely to be retained. They also exhibit better mental health, which bodes well for higher productivity and lower health care costs.” This conclusion is based on FWI’s regression analysis of its 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce.¹

FIGURE 2.
Outcomes for Employees in
Effective Workplaces



In 2004, FWI found a dramatic difference in employment outcomes associated with high workplace effectiveness as compared with low workplace effectiveness, as shown in Figure 2. (FWI created a composite index of features of an effective workplace, and then compared employment outcomes across different levels of effective workplaces.)²

Selection Process

To select practices for this catalog, FSPC first developed criteria. To be featured, the policies and practices had to:

1. Advance the values of the human services sector of investing in the strengths of people and communities.
2. Improve working parent/caregivers' ability to meet both job and family responsibilities, and yet be applicable to employees and volunteers in other stages of life.^c
3. Have some evidence indicating that the policy or practice is effective (i.e., it achieves the stated purpose, which is specific to the policy or practice) or is a new practice that sector leaders view as having merit.
4. Promote employee and volunteer wellness and work-life balance.

We then compiled information about a wide variety of organizational policies and practices from authoritative sources, including Corporate Voices for Working Families, Families and Work Institute, Society of Human Resource Management, and policy and research centers examining workforce and family issues. Our review was informed by the *Caring Workforce* case studies (in development). A multi-disciplinary advisory group of sector leaders (who direct volunteer management, human resources, or family strengthening programs or have expertise in work-family issues) reviewed a preliminary draft of this catalog and suggested improvements.^d

^c One exception is child care assistance, which specifically benefits staff who have dependent children.

^d FSPC did not conduct an exhaustive review due to resource constraints and challenges in directly comparing research conducted with a variety of methods, rigor, populations, and settings. We also sought to be more inclusive than exclusive in order to provide nonprofit organizations with a menu of options from which they could select ones that best fit their goals.

Caring Workplace Policies & Practices

This section provides a framework for progressively building a *Caring Workplace* through policies, practices, and a culture that enhance employee and volunteer commitment by promoting staff wellbeing and family stability. The *Caring Workplace* strategies are organized into 12 categories.

- Child Care and Out-of-School Time Assistance
- Community Enhancement
- Elder and Dependent Care Assistance
- Financial Stability
- Flexibility
- Health, Safety, and Wellness Promotion
- Linkages to Community Resources
- Paid and Unpaid Leave
- Positive Work Structure
- Professional Development
- Transportation Assistance
- Workplace Culture

Within most categories, specific policies and practices are placed in groups representing initial, intermediate, and capstone steps that nonprofit organizations can take to enhance their *Caring Workplaces*. These step groupings aim to help your organization incrementally build discrete benefits and privileges into a comprehensive system. Your workforce plan, along with staff input, should guide the selection of steps that align with your organizational priorities and resources and the specific needs of your paid and volunteer workforce.

As mentioned in the introduction, this catalog includes both employment and volunteer management practices. To help readers distinguish among these practices, the catalog uses the term “staff” to refer to both paid and volunteer workers,

Terms as Used in this Catalog

Employee

Hourly and salaried workers

Staff

Paid *and* volunteer workers

Volunteer

Voluntary workers providing a service for the organization, including those receiving a stipend and/or other volunteer benefits

“employee” to refer to hourly and/or salaried workers, and “volunteer” to refer to voluntary workers, including those receiving a stipend or other volunteer fringe benefits.

Caveats: In implementing the policies and practices in this catalog, nonprofit organizations should be careful to maintain compliance with relevant legal obligations, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act, Occupational Safety and Health Act, tax laws and regulations, and other federal, state, and local rules. You may also want to speak with insurers or legal advisors regarding liability issues and risk management.

Child Care and Out-of-School Time Assistance

Having their children cared for and educated in high-quality settings enables working parent/caregivers to be productive and effective at their paid or volunteer jobs. In contrast, child-care problems (for children and youth) are known to contribute to absences, shortened work days, difficulty focusing at work, and turnover.⁶ Yet, in many communities across the U.S., access to high-quality, affordable early child care and education and summer camps is problematic. For low-income families, common challenges are weak access to affordable, high-quality after-school activities and gaps in assistance with child care. Further, child care expenses take up a large portion of many low-income families' earnings.⁷ Volunteers face child-care challenges just as employees do.

By providing direct child care services or out-of-school time programs, respite vouchers, or stipends, nonprofit organizations can help make it possible for paid staff and volunteers to provide services while managing their personal caregiving responsibilities.

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Non-Financial Assistance	<p>Information – provide a listing of local providers of early care and education; out-of-school-time programs, and summer camps; disseminate brochures and Web sites about choosing a quality caregiver or after-school program</p> <p>Referrals to Intermediaries – link staff to expertise in securing quality child care</p>	<p>Accommodation Policies – allow staff to bring children to work under specified circumstances</p> <p>Flexibility Policies – enable staff to alter their work schedule or location</p> <p>Child Care Co-op – explore volunteers' interest in establishing a child care co-op and assist, if needed, with the initial set up</p>	<p>Participation in Community Partnerships – work with other stakeholders to expand affordable, high-quality early care and education services, out-of-school-time programs, and summer camps, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods and for at-risk children and youth</p>
Financial Assistance	<p>Paid Leave – enable employees to use paid leave to attend to the health or educational needs of their children and other family members</p>	<p>Reimburse – partially or fully offset the cost when staff use alternative or temporary child care providers (e.g., for sick children, or YMCA day camps on days that schools are closed) in order to work</p> <p>Broad FSA Definitions – expand definitions of allowable uses of existing FSA balances (e.g., “dependent care” that applies to both children and adults who are incapable of self-care)</p> <p>Reserve Spaces – contract with quality early care and education centers, out-of-school-time programs, and summer camps to assure a minimum number of spaces are available for staff to access</p>	<p>Arrange Child Care – provide space at the worksite for an early care and education center, out-of-school-time programs, or summer camp for employees' and volunteers' children</p> <p>Stipends – offer volunteers vouchers or a direct cash payment to subsidize child care while they perform a service</p> <p>Subsidies – reduce employees' out-of-pocket child care expenses</p>

Community Enhancement

While the core work of nonprofit human services organizations is to develop the assets of disadvantaged families and neighborhoods, less attention may be given to community building from the inside out. Community enhancement policies encourage employees to contribute time, talent, and treasure to their communities. Nonprofits can reap secondary benefits, including enhancements to:

- Employees' competencies, experience, and networks.
- Staff members' energy once they return to their jobs.
- Your organization's community image, reputation, and visibility.

Other sections of this catalog have capstone strategies relating to participation in local partnerships to strengthen community support systems for families, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods. These are great opportunities to involve employees and experienced volunteers in local initiatives that address systemic problems that affect staff and your organization.

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Financial Incentives	<p>Sponsor Staff in Fundraisers – make an organizational contribution to individual or teams of employees and volunteers (ex. walk-a-thon)</p> <p>Fundraisers – if your organization sponsors a table at a local fundraiser, invite regular volunteers to be your guests</p>	<p>Employee Giving Campaigns – organize or participate in giving campaigns (e.g., annual United Way campaign)</p> <p>Paycheck Deductions – enable employees to have their charitable contributions automatically deducted</p> <p><i>See also the Paid Leave section</i></p>	<p>Donation Matching – offer partial or full match for staff contributions to nonprofit organizations serving the community</p>
Non-Financial Assistance	<p>Information – disseminate local community service opportunities to employees</p> <p>Referrals – link staff with local volunteer centers, service events, or Idealist.org and other online volunteering matching services</p> <p>Service Event or Day – organize an annual day of service or a periodic service event for employees during the workweek</p> <p>Open Workplace to Local Volunteers – allow community organizations to use your workspace for volunteer activities (e.g., gift-wrapping during the holidays)</p>	<p>Family Volunteering – enable employees to participate in joint community service activities with one or more family members</p> <p>Food or Clothing Drives – with a community partner, organize staff in-kind contributions</p> <p>Mutual Aid – when staff have short-term needs, support coworker and volunteers' efforts to assist their peers; also, encourage volunteers to cover for each other if they are unable to provide their regularly scheduled service</p> <p><i>See also Flexibility section</i></p>	<p>Regular Community Service – organize a program of regular volunteering or pro bono service for paid employees</p> <p>Volunteer Engagement – ask seasoned or experienced volunteers to represent your nonprofit in local partnerships or leadership positions so as to enhance your linkages to the community</p> <p>Time Banking (<i>time banking is a formal system of reciprocal service exchange</i>) – create a mechanism through which staff can care for each other through a non-monetized exchange of time; time banking within volunteer ranks could be a way to facilitate mutual aid among volunteers within the community served</p> <p>Volunteer-Center Boards – have paid or volunteer staff serve on the local volunteer center's board, helping to mobilize community resources to meet local needs</p>

Elder and Dependent Care Assistance

When employees and volunteers have caregiving problems, their attention at work wanders or is focused on assisting their loved one instead of their work assignments. The aging of the U.S. population and the prevalence of disabilities among adults of all ages means that at least once during their careers, most staff will have some caregiving responsibilities for a dependent spouse/partner, child that is an adult, parents or relatives, and other adults considered “family.”

If sponsoring or subsidizing elder or dependent care services is not feasible, nonprofit organizations can help their staff manage their caregiving responsibilities by providing supports, such as paid leave and referrals to intermediaries that can help them navigate the confusing array of options in their communities. Volunteers face caregiving challenges just as employees do; providing direct care, respite vouchers, or stipends allows volunteers to work for your organization while meeting caregiving demands. (See also Child Care and Out-of-School Time Assistance, Flexibility, and Health, Safety, and Wellness Promotion sections.)

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Non-Financial Assistance	<p>Information – provide a listing of local long-term care and respite services; disseminate brochures or Web sites about caregiving (e.g., AARP Foundation’s free <i>Prepare to Care</i> planning guides for consumers) to all staff</p> <p>Referrals to Intermediaries – link staff to expertise in securing quality long-term care or respite services (e.g., many states have Aging and Disability Resource Centers); assure that volunteers are aware they can ask for information and referrals</p>	<p>Flexibility Policies – allow staff to alter their work schedule or location (see Flexibility section)</p> <p>Support Groups – connect staff to caregiver support groups in the community</p>	<p>Participation in Community Partnerships – work with other stakeholders to expand affordable, high-quality long-term care and respite services, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods</p>
Financial Assistance	<p>Paid Leave – enable employees to use paid leave to attend to the health or dependent-care needs of adult family members</p> <p>Flexible Spending Account/Arrangements – offer staff tax-free savings that can be withdrawn for specified dependent-child or -adult care services</p> <p><i>See also other entries in the Paid Leave section of this catalog</i></p>	<p>Stipends – offer respite care vouchers or a direct cash subsidy to volunteers to lower the cost of elder or dependent care while they perform a service</p> <p>Reserve Spaces – contract with quality adult day care centers to assure a minimum number of spaces are available for care-recipients of staff</p>	<p>Arrange Eldercare or Respite Services – provide space at the worksite or contract with respite providers for adult day care services</p> <p>Long-term Care Insurance – offer coverage to employees, and, ideally, to immediate family members</p> <p>Subsidies – reduce employees’ out-of-pocket elder or dependent care expense</p>

Financial Stability

Stable employment and finances correlate with family wellbeing, which in turn affects job performance.⁸ People need both income and assets to achieve financial stability. Nonprofit organizations can promote family financial stability by:

- Informing paid and volunteer staff about the availability of tax credits and government benefits (e.g., earned income tax credits, child care tax credits and subsidies, food stamps, housing assistance, and more).
- Giving referrals to community intermediaries that can help them apply.

In addition, partnerships with other community groups can increase access to high quality financial education and literacy, individual development accounts, and financial counseling. Advancing volunteers' financial stability is likely to require partnerships between human resources directors and volunteer directors. One stretch goal could be enabling higher value volunteers to opt in or out of as many perks as possible.

In terms of directly investing in family financial stability, nonprofit organizations can gradually enrich their fringe benefits packages, especially health plans and insurance coverage, for employees, including non-exempt and part-time positions. Gradually adjusting wages to meet a local living-wage standard is another key step in preventing family financial instability from interfering with work. Although not currently widespread practice, the potential to offer health plan coverage may represent a powerful incentive for volunteers to make a long-term commitment to your organization.

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Asset Development	<p>Direct Deposit of Paychecks/Stipends – offer staff direct deposit into checking and/or savings accounts at the financial institution of their choice</p> <p>Linking Staff with Conventional Financial Institutions (<i>including community development financial institutions</i>) – partner with financial institutions near the worksite and staff members' neighborhoods to provide information to staff; give release time to staff during their first month to open banking accounts</p>	<p>Automatic Payroll Deductions – enable employees to withhold funds from the paycheck to build deposits in flexible savings accounts, retirement savings, and similar accounts</p> <p>Individual Development Accounts (<i>IDAs are special savings accounts for low-income people that can be used only for specified purposes such as buying a home or car, starting a business, or paying tuition</i>) – match staff deposits to IDAs and/or work with a nonprofit that administers IDAs so staff can open an IDA, directly deposit part of their paychecks or stipends, and participate in financial education at the worksite during normal work hours</p>	<p>Homeownership Assistance – identify local nonprofits that can provide staff with quality homeownership education and counseling; if resources permit, provide grants to qualified employees to assist with a down payment or reduce closing costs</p> <p>Participation in Community Partnerships – work with other stakeholders to encourage conventional and community financial services institutions to locate in disadvantaged neighborhoods</p>

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Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
<p>Cross-cutting Assistance</p>	<p>Encouraging Use of Employer-Sponsored Benefits – provide information and sponsor educational sessions to encourage staff to make effective use of benefits; outreach materials in other languages may increase uptake</p> <p>Information – disseminate materials from public education campaigns (e.g., AmericaSaves); raise awareness of helpful Web sites (e.g., “personal finance” section at www.extension.org) and local financial education classes from reputable sources</p> <p>Publicize Foreclosure Prevention Hotlines – assure your employees and volunteers know the free 888-995-HOPE™ hotline helps homeowners avoid foreclosure by connecting them to HUD-approved counselors</p>	<p>Benefits for Part-Time Staff – open fringe benefits to part-time employees (e.g., provide prorated benefit plans to employees working 19-35 hours/week; allow staff working 19 or fewer hours per week to participate at full cost)</p> <p>Financial Education and Literacy – work with reliable community educators (e.g., county Cooperative Extension office) to offer programs at or near the worksite</p> <p>Referrals – provide a directory of reliable local sources for assistance with tax returns (e.g., the local Volunteer income tax assistance (VITA) program); credit counseling and repair; financial planning; homeownership programs; and financial counseling. Employee assistance programs or another community intermediary may have such a directory</p>	<p>Emergency, Short-Term Financial Assistance – offer low-interest loans or grants to staff facing a catastrophic, unanticipated, or emergency event that may interfere with their work responsibilities (e.g., emergency car repair)</p> <p>Financial Planning Vouchers or Subsidies – reduce the cost of accessing reliable, independent financial planning services</p>
<p>Family-Supporting Income</p>	<p>Information on Tax Credits and Government Benefits – provide information to staff about tax credits and government benefits programs (e.g., earned income tax credit, child care tax credits, food stamps);</p> <p>Corporate Voices for Working Families has a free turnkey kit for employers</p> <p>Referrals – link staff with local agencies or Web sites (e.g., Benefits QuickLink at http://www.aarp.org/money/lowincomehelp/quicklink/) that can help them assess eligibility and apply for tax credits and government benefits</p>	<p>Living Wage Benchmarks and Reporting – with board of directors, set a living wage standard as a threshold goal for all employees, along with milestones for attaining the standard over a period of years</p> <p>Volunteer Stipends – offer stipends to offset the costs of volunteering (e.g., transportation) to lower income individuals</p>	<p>Cost of Living Adjustments – establish a policy of maintaining staff members’ purchasing power by automatically increasing wages, salaries, and stipends each year based on a regional cost-of-living index</p>

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Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
<p>Insurance (Employer-Sponsored)</p>	<p>Health Plans – sponsor a health plan that covers health care expenses, including preventive care, disease management, and behavioral health services, with affordable cost-sharing requirements</p> <p>Disability – sponsor coverage to temporarily replace part of staff members’ income if they become unable to work due to an injury or illness</p> <p>Information and Referral – inform staff about Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance Program coverage and connect them with local agencies that can assist with applying</p>	<p>Dental and Vision Plans – sponsor a plan that covers dental and vision services, including preventive care, with affordable cost-sharing requirements</p> <p>Life – provide a basic term policy to provide some financial assistance to staff members’ designated beneficiaries upon death</p> <p>Flexible Spending Account/Arrangements – offer staff tax-free savings that can be withdrawn for specified services (e.g., child care, medical, and eldercare)</p> <p>Sliding-Scale Employee Contributions –set a sliding-scale for employee cost-sharing on premiums, so the organization pays a higher percentage of the premium for lower paid employees</p>	<p>Insurance for Volunteers – explore and, as possible, offer insurance coverage to your qualifying volunteers, such as a health plan or "on the job" accident and liability insurance</p> <p>Long-Term Care – sponsor a plan to cover some or all medical and nonmedical services associated with long-term illness or disability</p>
<p>Retirement</p>	<p>Employer-Sponsored Retirement Plan – sponsor a tax-advantaged plan that allows employees to save for retirement, even if organizational contributions are currently not feasible</p>	<p>Automatic Enrollment – encourage retirement savings by automatically enrolling new hires in retirement plans unless they opt out</p> <p>Employer Contributions – make periodic contributions to employee retirement plans</p>	<p>Retirement Savings Match – create a financial incentive by wholly or partially matching employee contributions to retirement plans</p>

Flexibility

The core of flexibility, according to the Families and Work Institute, is “policies and practices that give employees greater control over their work schedules, their work locations, and their ability to take time off to meet personal or family needs.”⁹ The return on investment (ROI) for flexibility is greater employee commitment and engagement, reduced interference from family- and personal-related issues on productivity, and higher retention.¹⁰

Although flexible workplace policies and practices are more commonly offered to better paid employees, those in lower positions also need choices about when and where they work in order to take care of family or other personal matters. Employers that give frontline workers some ability to set their work schedules and locations, have achieved what Corporate Voices for Working Families describes as “powerful impacts ... in terms of engagement, turnover and financial results.”¹¹

Flexibility and volunteering go hand-in-hand. Because they are providing a free service, most volunteers hope the nonprofit organization will try to accommodate their scheduling requests. What’s more, employee supervisors and managers could learn a lot from volunteer supervisors and managers who are skilled and experienced in providing flexibility.

Flexibility not only contributes to family stability, but also eliminates a potential barrier to professional development. From an immediate view, professional education and training programs during the workweek require schedule adjustments. From a long-term view, flexibility with career paths can help staff to pursue their professional goals. For example, a volunteer may seek a paid position if a spouse is laid off, or a long-time employee might request a sabbatical for a summer overseas volunteer program. It is also common for employees to want to shift between full- and part-time status—or move to a less stressful position—while caring for young children or elderly parents, returning to college, starting their own nonprofit, or beginning a transition to retirement. By having ways to accommodate staff, your organization can retain critical talent. (See the Professional Development section for additional ways employers can respond to the career lattices needed by today’s workforce.)

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Employment & Service Options	<p>Part-Time Options – when full-time employees or part-time volunteers seek to reduce their hours, offer options such as restructured positions or lateral moves</p> <p>Leave of Absence – for paid and voluntary staff facing extraordinary circumstances, permit leaves of absences with a commitment to welcome them back into an equivalent position, as resources permit</p>	<p>Job-Sharing – create a formal policy permitting and supporting job-sharing for paid and volunteer staff</p> <p>Part-Time Benefits – preserve eligibility for benefits for part-time employees (e.g., provide prorated benefit plans to employees working 19-35 hours/week; allow all part-time employees to accrue paid time off on a prorated schedule)</p>	<p>Part-Time to Full-Time Support – when part-time employees seek to expand their status, provide needed training and supervisory support for restructuring or adding new responsibilities</p>

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Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Scheduling Choices	<p>Break Choices – give staff some or complete choice about when to take breaks, in accordance with policy regarding the number and duration</p> <p>Temporary FlexTime – on an as-needed basis, allow staff to adjust working hours during the workday or workweek if they are unable to conduct family or personal affairs during non-business hours</p>	<p>Flexible Scheduling – institute a formal policy allowing staff to set regular working hours during a specified scheduling period</p> <p>Compressed Workweeks – enable staff to shorten the workweek by lengthening workdays</p> <p>Supervisor Training – develop supervisors’ skills in administering an effective flexible scheduling policy</p>	<p>Reward Supervisors – recognize supervisors and managers who consistently support the needs of their staff for flexible scheduling and telecommuting options</p>
Telecommuting	<p>Informal Arrangements – give supervisors discretion in deciding when staff can telecommute on a case-by-case basis</p>	<p>Formal Policy – authorize telecommuting with specified parameters in employee and volunteer handbooks</p> <p>Supervisor Training – develop supervisors’ skills in administering an effective telecommuting policy</p>	<p>Telecommuting Tools – have a set of laptops that lower paid staff can check out when working from home</p> <p>Broadband Subsidies – reimburse or subsidize the cost of broadband subscriptions for lower paid staff so all can access telecommuting options and be productive while working from home</p>

Health, Safety, and Wellness Promotion

(For health plan coverage, see *Financial Stability* section.)

Growth in worksite health promotion investments reflects an increased recognition among employers that improving and protecting workers' health has a direct, positive impact on the bottom line. In fact, studies show that well-designed and well-implemented initiatives produce a positive ROI by reducing the rise in medical and disability expenses, increasing employee "presenteeism," and minimizing absences.¹² As an example, *HR Magazine* recently reported on a high-quality study of wellness programs at Highmark, Inc., a nonprofit health plan with 12,000 employees. The organization realized a \$1.68 return on investment for every \$1 spent on wellness programs between 2001-2005. The savings came from program participants' improved health and reduced medical expenses compared to employees not participating in the programs but who had similar health risks.¹³

Your nonprofit's mix of health, safety, and wellness promotion components should be based on the health risks of your paid and voluntary staff. The steps outlined below eventually lead to integrating worksite health, safety, and wellness into your nonprofit's strategic plan. For agencies just getting started, options range from working with a vendor to conduct health risk appraisals, to encouraging staff to stay home when they are ill, to helping organize a health fair with local partners. More advanced organizations can sponsor employee assistance programs, personalized health coaching, worksite screenings, periodic safety trainings, health promotion incentive programs, and more.

One opportunity is to open your health and wellness programs (e.g., worksite screenings, wellness seminars, gym discounts, and referrals to community assistance) to volunteers, especially those that provide regular service. At very little additional cost for some options, you can expand their access to health and wellness resources while strengthening their connection to your nonprofit.

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Cross-cutting Support	<p>Information – disseminate materials from public education campaigns (e.g., America on the Move, http://aom.americaonthemove.org) and raise awareness of helpful local resources (e.g., health information centers at public and hospital libraries; free health education classes in the community)</p> <p>Volunteer Communications – via the volunteer e-newsletter or bulletin board, invite volunteers to join worksite programs and build up their awareness of local health resources</p> <p>Referrals – provide a directory of community resources for health education and counseling (e.g., voluntary health associations, state quitline for tobacco users, Alcoholics Anonymous)</p>	<p>Nurse Line Support – through the health plan or another vendor, provide 24/7 access to a nurse line for triage, answers to health questions, and guidance</p> <p>Educational Seminars – organize lunchtime seminars through which staff can learn about ways to improve their health and be savvy health care consumers</p> <p>Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – offer an external EAP that can both help staff resolve personal difficulties or access external work-life assistance</p>	<p>Direct Care – provide a range of preventive and primary care services at the worksite</p> <p>Health Coaching – contract with the health plan or a vendor to offer staff personalized health coaching or targeted communications related to staff needs</p>

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Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Healthy Environments	<p>Communicate – encourage staff to practice good hygiene (e.g., washing hands, sanitizing work area) and stay home when they are sick</p> <p>Healthy Workplaces – provide staff with a working environment free of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs</p> <p>Staircase and Bicycle Access – work with property manager so staff can easily access stairs and have a place to secure bicycles</p>	<p>Healthy Choices – adopt policies of serving healthful foods at meetings and events and offering healthful foods and beverages in vending machines</p> <p>Flexible Scheduling – allow staff to adjust their schedules to fit in physical activity or beneficial stress-management activities during breaks or lunch periods</p> <p>Wellness Programs – offer occasional programs to encourage healthy lifestyles (e.g., a 10,000-steps challenge, free flu vaccinations, cooking contest with a focus on increasing fruits and vegetables)</p>	<p>Integrate and Invest – incorporate worksite health promotion as an organizational priority, with sustained multi-faceted investments in staff health</p> <p>Onsite Fitness Center – offer exercise equipment and showers</p>
Financial Incentives	<p>Health Risk Appraisals – reward staff who complete an annual confidential health risk appraisal (e.g., benefits credits)</p>	<p>Fitness Center and Other Discounts – through the health plan or direct subsidies, reduce the cost for using a fitness center</p> <p>Incentive Programs – reward or recognize staff for participating in health promotion or disease management programs</p>	<p>Health Improvement Rewards – recognize staff that achieve important health improvement benchmarks (e.g., weight loss, improved cholesterol levels, completion of a diabetes self-management course)</p>
Occupational Safety	<p>Formal Policy – establish a formal policy of reducing hazards at the worksite that could impair the health and safety of staff</p>	<p>Occupational Health and Safety Training – arrange for periodic staff and supervisor training to reduce worksite occupational risks (e.g., first aid, CPR training, ergonomics)</p>	<p>Integration – incorporate occupational safety with other health and wellness in corporate strategic plan</p> <p>Annual Updating – track occupational health and safety measures and update program at least annually to incorporate best practices and adjust for changing risk profiles</p>
Screening Programs	<p>Information and Education – develop staff understanding about the benefits of recommended preventive screening</p> <p>Health Fair – organize a health fair with other nearby employers and local partners – invite employees and volunteers</p>	<p>Worksite Screenings – arrange for a qualified health care provider to provide private screenings at the worksite for common health conditions (e.g., blood pressure, body-mass index, vision, cholesterol, mammography) and invite volunteers to come</p>	<p>Eliminate Co-Pays for Preventive Services – provide full coverage of recommended clinical preventive services in sponsored health plan</p> <p>Health Plan Performance Benchmarks – hold health plan accountable for achieving performance goals (e.g., percent of staff receiving an annual flu shot)</p>

Linkages to Community Resources

Paid employees—and volunteers providing services to your organization—may be unaware of community and governmental supports from which they may benefit. For low-income families, accessing tax credits (e.g., earned income tax credit) and government benefit programs (e.g., food stamps) can lift them out of poverty and stabilize family life. Assistance from community organizations—whether literacy classes, quality after-school programs, the local food bank, or an emergency car repair loan—can also make a difference. Regardless of economic circumstances, nearly all families need support, helping hands, or guidance from people or organizations in their community. Because staff may be reluctant to ask supervisors or managers for assistance, increasing awareness about community resources is an important first step. A second step is enabling staff to access skilled assistance in navigating complex community systems.

Through selective utilization of volunteers, your nonprofit can minimize some new expenses related to enhancing staff members' connections to community resources. For example, volunteers can do Internet and telephone research to identify local opportunities, providers, and intermediaries. They can plan lunch-and-learn seminars for staff. With training and support, designated volunteers could even be your organization's community navigator that assists employees and other volunteers with information and referrals.

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Assist and Inform	<p>Awareness and Information – disseminate materials from local intermediaries or agencies to build awareness of the wide variety of resources in the community</p> <p>Referrals to Intermediaries – identify and refer staff to community intermediaries, such as 2-1-1 systems, that can connect them to programs and services for children, youth, families, persons with disabilities, and more</p>	<p>Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or Employee Resource Line – offer an external EAP that can provide personalized referrals to community resources</p> <p>Educate – invite local agencies to make short presentations at staff meetings or provide materials about the ways they can help families and vulnerable people. Invite volunteers to participate.</p>	<p>Intensify Mutual Assistance Relationships – develop a memorandum of understanding or other course of action with two or three other local nonprofits to help each other's employees and volunteers with connecting to supports</p> <p>Community Partnerships – participate in local efforts to mobilize or strengthen 2-1-1 or other systems that help residents navigate the complicated web of local service providers</p>

Paid and Unpaid Leave

Paid leave enables employees to take time off for specific purposes, up to a maximum number of hours, without reducing their paycheck; supervisor approval may be required. Just like their full-time and higher-paid peers, part-time, lower level, and new employees need paid leave to look after their own physical and mental health, minimize the spread of illness to clients and co-workers, tend to family or personal concerns, renew themselves through a break from work (e.g., a vacation or external volunteering experience), and have an incentive to stay on the job.

In some cases, flexible scheduling and telecommuting can be an alternative for paid leave, particularly for employees and volunteers who are caregivers. Your nonprofit can also encourage volunteers and part-time employees to cover for their peers when someone is unable to work at their regularly scheduled time.

Other types of leave policies offer critical support. One is unpaid leave so employees can take time off to attend to personal matters, albeit with consequent earnings reductions. Release time lets paid and volunteer staff take time away from their job for approved activities such as voting, attending a training session, or participating in a volunteer activity. Leaves of absences for employees and volunteers respond to situations in which staff are unavailable for work for a period of time and yet want to return to their (or comparable) positions.

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Civic Engagement Release or Leave	Voting Release Time – permit staff to take up to two hours of release time at the start or end of the work day to participate in designated primary/caucus and election days	Jury Duty – provide paid leave or release time to employees for jury duty, perhaps requiring employees to submit jury duty remuneration to the organization	Volunteer Release – permit employees to participate in approved external volunteer activities during their usual working hours, up to a maximum number of hours per month or other period
Paid Leave	<p>Medical/Sick Leave (Employees Only) – pay employees when they take time off of work for illness, injury, or medical appointment up to a maximum number of hours. Ideally, permit employees to take sick leave in hourly increments.</p> <p>Mutual Assistance – encourage volunteers and part-time employees to cover for each other when someone is unable to work at their regularly scheduled time</p> <p>Paid Time Off (PTO) – give employees a set number of hours to use each year for any purpose (ex. vacation, medical, personal)</p>	<p>Medical/Sick Leave (Broad) – allow employees to receive pay when they are absent from work because a family member is ill or has a medical appointment</p> <p>Parental Leave – establish paid leave or release time so any staff who is a parent or primary caregiver of a dependent child can attend or participate in school-related events (e.g., parent-teacher conferences) for that child, up to a maximum number of hours per year</p> <p>Vacation or Annual Leave – enable employees to take vacation or annual leave, ideally in small increments (e.g., less than a week or a day) without prescheduling</p>	Sabbatical – provide long-term employees and volunteers with a set amount of paid or unpaid leave so the staff member can have a break from their usual work in order to study, perform public service, travel, or pursue another interest

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Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
<p>Policy Enhancements</p>	<p>Remove Punitive Policies for Unscheduled Absences – because children and other care-recipients can have unpredictable needs, eliminate termination or unpaid-suspension penalties for reasonable unscheduled absences; train supervisors so they can effectively administer the policy</p> <p>Leave Donations – permit employees to donate annual leave to coworkers who have exhausted all paid leave but are unable to return to work</p>	<p>Eliminate Probationary Periods – recognize that family and personal problems can crop up at any time and eliminate or reduce probationary periods during which new hires cannot take any leave</p> <p>Expand Leave Policies for Professional Development – broaden definitions of allowable uses of paid or unpaid leave to include time spent commuting to and participating in external education or training courses</p>	<p>Community Partnerships – join partnerships seeking to build effective networks of state and local resources that assist not only persons with serious disabilities and health conditions, but also their caregivers</p>
<p>Unpaid Leave</p>	<p>Employees Ineligible for Paid Leave (e.g., <i>part-time status</i>) – enable these workers to take unpaid leave so they can address family and medical responsibilities, if flexible scheduling is not available to them</p>	<p>Continued Employment after Exhausting Paid Leave – provide employees with an opportunity to maintain continued employment in instances where family, medical, or personal reasons require absence from work and all paid leave has been exhausted due to illness or disability</p>	<p>Leave of Absence for Volunteers – offer a formal “leave of absence” policy for regular volunteers, allowing them to notify your organization if they will be unavailable for scheduled assignments for a period of time</p>

Positive Work Structure

Burnout is common issue for many nonprofit human services organizations, as is high turnover and poor performance.^{14,15} Positive work structures, including reasonable workloads and staff involvement in management decisions, can make a difference by providing supportive conditions for all workers to succeed. The table highlights key aspects and examples of a positive work structure, many of which are consistent with the Family and Work Institute's Effective Workplace Framework (presented on pages 5-7). Organizations that want to assess their current work structure may find these tools useful.

- *The Standards of Excellence Index* from the **Boston College Center for Work & Family** (free).
- ***A Guide to Investing in Volunteer Resources Management: Improve Your Philanthropic Portfolio***, by the UPS Foundation in partnership with the Association for Volunteer Administration and the Points of Light Foundation, explains effective volunteer management practices and provides a quick assessment tool (free).

Aspects	Examples
<i>Adequate Resources</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees and volunteers should have adequate support to do their jobs, including well-functioning computers and Internet connections, effective supervisors, safe working environments, clear expectations, periodic training, and more.
<i>Autonomy Coupled with Enhanced Responsibility</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff have choices in structuring their work and are accountable for achieving results.
<i>Minimal Mandatory Overtime</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overtime for all staff is kept to a minimum. • Workloads are not excessive. • When overtime is unavoidable, staff receive advance notice; ideally, the organization offers assistance in making alternate arrangements for child care or transportation and provides compensatory time or overtime wages.
<i>Reasonable Workloads</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workloads should be reasonable for the hours worked, client mix, and organization-provided resources such as technology tools. • In the long term, positive work structures avoid burdening one group of employees so that another group can have an improved work-life balance.
<i>Rewards</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization recognizes a job well done with regular feedback from supervisors, employee and volunteer recognition awards, bonuses, gift certificates, written notes, or in-kind rewards such as an afternoon off. • To reward performance and results, employees receive merit-based pay raises and the chance to assume new responsibilities.

Professional Development

To move up to good jobs that can support a family, many low-paid workers must overcome two crucial employment barriers: limited education and few advanced skills. But doing so is more than a matter of will; it is a matter of access to opportunity. Due to the socio-economic structure of most American communities, low-wage positions tend to have few job advancement prospects; training or post-secondary education tuition can be unaffordable on low incomes; high-quality basic skills programs can be scarce; and social networks in low-income communities are often more helpful with getting by than “getting ahead.”³

Employers have a stake in helping disadvantaged staff develop competencies and build work experience. High turnover rates associated with adults who have limited skills are one reason to care. Another reason is the growing skills gap in which nonprofits are having trouble hiring the skilled labor they need, even for entry-level positions.³

Your support for employees’ and volunteers’ professional development can improve retention. For example, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGES® projects, which provide scholarships and salary supplements, have reduced turnover among child care providers and teachers.¹⁶ Volunteers, too, tend to stay with nonprofits that provide opportunities to learn, develop skills, and improve the quality of service they provide.

A modern system of career and professional development provides opportunities for education and training in all dimensions—a lattice approach. (As described by the New Jersey Professional Development Center, “By definition, the term ‘career lattice’ implies multiple entry points and multiple pathways; a progressive professional development system that allows for horizontal, vertical, and diagonal movement.”¹⁷) Lattices enable employees and volunteers to pursue personal and professional growth goals whether it means downshifting to less responsibility, lateral moves for growth and variety, going from full- to part-time to pursue outside interests or higher education, or fast-tracking the traditional career ladder.

Prime strategies are expanding supports at the worksite to help lower paid staff to develop competencies and gain experience, creating career paths for volunteers and lower level employees, and offering incentives to volunteers and employees for participating in education or training in the community. Volunteering and service-learning are additional ways to help working parent/caregivers and youth develop stronger connections to their community, learn new skills and knowledge, find new role models, change careers, gain useful work experience, and improve local conditions. Smaller nonprofits can explore ways to conduct joint training or work together to develop career lattice opportunities across their agencies. State and federal assistance may be available to reduce education and training expenses (e.g., staff members might be eligible for federal Pell grants or state scholarships, community consortia or intermediaries could secure state or private grants for skills training,¹⁸ and group of local human services providers could start a partnership with community colleges for in-service education).

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
<i>Individual Job-based Development</i>	<p>Mentoring – especially for new employees and volunteers, pair staff with more senior or experienced colleagues who will provide encouragement, effective guidance, and problem-solving assistance</p> <p>Enrichment/Restructuring – gradually redesign paid and volunteer positions to add more advanced responsibilities without creating a work overload</p>	<p>Individual Development Plans (IDPs) – tailor IDPs to bring together organization goals with individual staff interests and potential</p> <p>On-the-Job Training – establish a process in which supervisors or peers help staff to develop competencies and gain experience</p>	<p>Tuition Reimbursement – pay for education and training for staff to develop them for a specific position</p>

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Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
<p>Staff Development</p>	<p>Recognition – acknowledge and celebrate individual initiative or teamwork for both employees and volunteers</p> <p>Job Rotation – develop a system whereby staff (employees, volunteers, or both) trade positions or responsibilities to enhance their skills, obtain variety, and perhaps sidestep burnout</p>	<p>Staff Involvement in Management Decisions – establish processes to regularly obtain and consider paid and volunteer staff input (from all levels of the organization) in management decisions</p> <p>Career Path Development – especially for volunteers and lower paid positions in the organization, create pathways whereby staff can develop competencies to move up to other positions</p>	<p>Employer-Sponsored Training – train groups of employees and/or volunteers to enhance their knowledge and skills</p>
<p>Incentives</p>	<p>Recognition – celebrate, and even reward, staff efforts to augment their education or skills on their own time</p> <p>Flexible Scheduling – enable staff to access external education, training, and volunteering during usual business hours</p> <p>Travel Reimbursement – especially for volunteers and lower paid staff, reimburse travel expenses incurred to obtain education or training related to their job</p>	<p>Computer Donations or Subsidies – give older computers or subsidize new computers on a sliding scale so low-income staff can connect to the workplace, have ready access to information and electronic transactions, and participate in online courses</p> <p>Tuition Reimbursement – partially or fully subsidize the cost of completing an educational or training course directly related to paid or volunteer position</p>	<p>Tuition Reimbursement – provide employees and high-value volunteers with full or partial subsidies for skills training, post-secondary education, literacy courses, English as a Second Language programs, or adult basic education</p> <p>Volunteer Leave – pay staff for time spent volunteering that develops new skills or broadens their networks and knowledge</p>
<p>Community Partnerships</p>	<p>Information – share information with staff about local career development, education, and training resources</p> <p>Referrals – link staff to local employment, education, and training providers</p> <p>Formal Education – allow community literacy, post-employment services, education, or training providers to offer classes at the worksite; explore obtaining seats in community trainings for volunteers</p>	<p>Employment Supports – connect entry-level and low-wage employees with local agencies to help them apply for tax credits and government benefits</p> <p>Informal Education – at or near worksite, bring in community partners to conduct workshops or seminars – and invite volunteers</p>	<p>Volunteering Days or Events – organize days or events for staff to contribute to community betterment</p> <p>Tickets to Community Events – provide free or discounted tickets and passes to family-friendly community events to employees and volunteers</p>

Transportation Assistance

Having access to reliable, affordable transportation to your organization's worksite(s) is a prerequisite for a stable workforce. Conversely, the lack of reliable, affordable transportation can discourage qualified talent from applying for paid or voluntary positions as well as create unscheduled leaves of absences. Non-financial support—from commuter assistance programs to worksite location—can help attract and retain a high-quality workforce at all points.

In these times of record gasoline prices, financial assistance with transportation costs can make a difference in the economic stability of lower income families. Volunteers, especially those on limited incomes, may be facing difficult choices about covering their commuting expenses to your service sites; if their job entails driving (e.g., delivering Meals on Wheels) as an in-kind donation, the cost of providing that service is rising and may become prohibitive.

Focus Area	Initial Steps	Intermediate Steps	Capstone Steps
Financial Assistance	<p>Connect Staff with External Transportation Subsidies – encourage staff to explore transportation subsidies, vouchers, or car-ownership programs that may be available to lower income families or persons with disabilities</p> <p>Update Mileage Reimbursement Rates – raise mileage reimbursements to the Internal Revenue Service cap</p> <p>Pre-Tax Payroll Deductions – offer staff the ability to purchase commuter fare cards with pre-tax income</p>	<p>Donations of Gas Cards – ask local businesses to donate gas cards for volunteers to assist with their commuting expenses or in-kind contributions (e.g., delivering of meals to homes)</p> <p>Transportation Discounts – provide incentives to use mass transit or muscle power (e.g., walking, biking) by reducing the cost through subsidies or vouchers</p> <p>Free or Subsidized Parking – provide parking spaces to volunteers and employees at no or reduced cost</p>	<p>Vouchers for Volunteers – eliminate transportation costs, which can be a barrier to service, by offering transit, gas, or parking vouchers to the organization's volunteers</p> <p>Gas Card Rewards – recognize paid and volunteer staff performance by providing gas cards as gifts or spot awards</p>
Non-Financial Assistance	<p>Awareness and Referrals – assure that employees and volunteers know about transportation assistance available through government or nonprofit agencies</p> <p>Commuter Options – educate staff about how commuter intermediaries (e.g., regional area transportation authority or Commuter Choice) can help them find commuting solutions</p>	<p>Ride-Sharing – encourage staff to carpool by helping to match coworkers living nearby or by providing incentives such as free garage parking for carpools</p> <p>Telecommuting or Compressed Workweeks – offer staff the ability to save by reducing their commuting trips</p>	<p>Community Partnerships – work with other local stakeholders to strengthen the community's transit infrastructure, especially for people living in disadvantaged neighborhoods</p>

Workplace Culture

Flexible schedules, paid time off, employee assistance programs, and policies encouraging community service matter little if staff perceive they will be penalized for taking advantage of these or other work-life assistance. For this reason, organizations must deliberately cultivate a *Caring Workplace* culture that recognizes that staff have lives outside the office door. The guiding ethos is valuing people as the organization's foremost asset, a value that underlies most nonprofit organizations' missions. The strategy is helping staff realize their full potential on the job by supporting their efforts to meet work, family, and personal responsibilities. In a *Washington Post* interview, John Caparella, chief operating officer of Gaylord Hotels, which has received "best employer" awards, noted, "Culture is not an accident. Culture is strategy. If you can establish and control the culture, that will drive the success of the business."¹⁹

A supportive culture—"the way we do things around here"—is essential to an effective workplace, which in turn, correlates with high staff commitment to the organization and mission, clients, and their jobs.²⁰ Achieving a *Caring Workplace* culture requires all levels of the organization making staff wellness a priority.

- **An executive suite** that sets supportive policies and provides adequate resources, leads by example, communicates expectations, trains and rewards managers for effectively implementing *Caring Workplace* policies and practices, and involves staff in management decisions, including work-life assistance.
- **Supervisors and managers** who have the skills and organizational support, including accountability, to help staff shoulder their work and family responsibilities in ways that will improve performance.
- **Staff** that work in partnership with supervisors and coworkers so that over time no one is unduly burdened, performance goals are met, and all have the opportunity to access assistance with work, family, and personal issues.

The table highlights key aspects of a *Caring Workplace* culture and provides some examples. Establishing the desired culture often requires training both supervisors and staff—including volunteers—so they understand your expectations. In particular, supervisors and managers need to be able to strike a balance in consistent treatment of all employees yet accommodate special circumstances so coworkers do not resent the differential treatment; likewise, the organization should aim for consistent treatment of volunteers with similar levels of involvement (e.g., all volunteers providing 10 hours or more of service per month).

Building a *Caring Workplace* culture is an ongoing process of shaping the norms and values that influence staff experiences and interactions. Organizations that want to assess their current culture and measure changes over time can use available tools such as these.

- *The Standards of Excellence Index* from the **Boston College Center for Work & Family** has indicators concerning the work-life culture and other types of assistance (free).
- As published in the August 2003 *Community, Work & Family* journal, the nine-item "perceived organizational family support" measure developed by St. Joseph's College and Baruch College can help organizations quickly assess employees' perception of family friendliness (fee for full journal article).²¹
- Some nonprofits may be able to use or adapt the *Warmth Surveys for Elders, Families and Employees from the Texas Long Term Care Institute* (free).
- *A Guide to Investing in Volunteer Resources Management: Improve Your Philanthropic Portfolio*, by the UPS Foundation in partnership with the Association for Volunteer Administration and the Points of Light Foundation, includes a quick checklist to assess organizational support for volunteers (free).

Aspect	Examples
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisor(s) is understanding of occasional family and personal life distractions. • Staff do not fear reprisal if they use or follow <i>Caring Workplace</i> policies, programs, and practices.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications emphasize that staff are your foremost asset. • Employees and volunteers are welcomed to meetings, workshops, etc. Volunteer supervisors regularly post information about worksite programs and encourage participation. • Talent development and staff recognition efforts reinforce the organization's humanistic values. • Formal policies and leadership statements provide an environment in which staff and their supervisors can take steps to promote balance among work, family, personal, and community responsibilities.
(A) Fair Shake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers set reasonable expectations for staff productivity and provide the conditions and support so staff can succeed, including for times when family or personal matters may interfere with work. • Staff are highly engaged in their work and seek to minimize family and personal disruptions.
Give and Take	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In return for greater autonomy and career path assistance, staff accept additional responsibilities and accountability. • When personal issues distract or interfere with work, supervisors and staff find win-win solutions. • Supervisors take steps so that over time no individual or staff subgroup bears a disproportionate burden so others can enjoy a greater ability to attend to family and personal matters. • Supervisors and staff agree that "we're all in this together."
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and practices provide supportive working conditions across occupations; positions (exempt, non-exempt, voluntary); and stages of life. • Bias is absent; whether to attend to family, personal, or community obligations, flexibility is available. • At all levels of the organization, staff receive recognition for high-quality products and services. • When making decisions, managers obtain and consider input from staff at all levels.
Mutual Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisors and staff believe they can count on each other to maintain privacy, tell the truth, do a good job, and adhere to organizational policies and values. • Performance expectations are clear to supervisors and staff. • Accountability systems reinforce trust by providing a mechanism to assure that each side fulfills their obligations.
Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In policy and in practice, supervisors and co-workers refrain from sharing information that an employee or volunteer considers personal or private. • Staff can make reasonable requests to access paid leave or flexible scheduling to take care of family or personal business without having to disclose non-essential details.
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and supervisors listen to each other and appreciate each others' contributions and opinions. • Supervisors and the organization avoid requiring staff to work overtime (paid or unpaid); when overtime is necessary, they provide advance notice and perhaps offer additional dependent care or transportation assistance or alternative worksite arrangements. • Staff and leadership show consideration for demands of different stages of life, cultures, and personal affairs.

Endnotes

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This series of policy briefs produced by the Family Strengthening Policy Center (FSPC) seeks to describe a new way of thinking about how to strengthen families raising children in low-income communities and how this approach can and should influence policy. The premise of “family strengthening” in this context, and as championed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is that children do well when cared for by supportive families, which, in turn, do better when they live in vital and supportive communities. The series describes ways in which enhancing connections within families and between families and the institutions that affect them result in better outcomes for children and their families.

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The Center benefits from the guidance and involvement of the Family Strengthening Peer Network, which provides opportunities for its members to share knowledge on family strengthening strategies, learn what other organizations are doing, and find synergies and potential areas of collaboration.

This brief reflects the findings and views of the Family Strengthening Policy Center, which is solely responsible for its content. For more information or to access other family strengthening policy briefs, visit www.nassembly.org/fspc.

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