

## **Balancing Work and Family Caregiving**

By Trish Laub, guest article for 50 Plus Marketplace News, Denver Metro, May 2020

Every employee is faced with the daily challenge of balancing work and personal responsibilities. And in response, employers have offered some benefits, such as flexible schedules and working remotely, to help employees function in both arenas. The latest -- and perhaps greatest -- challenge is the rapidly growing demand for employees to be family caregivers. That need has become a national crisis that is interfering with employees' performance and costing U.S. businesses over \$40 billion dollars each year.

There are more than 65 million family caregivers in the United States, of which 60% are working. One in six employees is providing family care. These numbers do not include part-time employees; those who assist with errands and household tasks, who may not even consider themselves caregivers; or remote caregivers who are trying to oversee a loved one's care from a distance. At the low end, these caregivers are providing care 20 hours a week, the equivalent of a part-time job. And, somewhat surprisingly, of those over 50, more than 50% are men.

What can employers do to support their employees through their periods of family caregiving? Flexible work schedules and family leave are only part of the solution. The real goal is for employers to empower their employees with the information to make educated caregiving decisions, and for employees to communicate with management about caregiving responsibilities and challenges. A strategy is needed to encompass options that reach beyond modified work schedules. It should include increasing awareness of current benefits, and introducing caregiving-related educational programs and resources.

Employees who have family caregiving responsibilities should talk with their Human Resources department about their caregiving challenges and what might be helpful to them in order to stay focused at work and remain able to participate in the care and support of a loved one.