

BALANCING WORK AND CAREGIVING

TIPS FOR EMPLOYED CAREGIVERS
OF FAMILY OR FRIENDS



Balance Work and Caregiving Responsibilities

Tips for Employed Caregivers of Family or Friends

Introduction

As the population grows older, more and more people are assisting in caring for a family member or friend. Did you know that there are more than 6.1 million employed Canadians, or 35 percent of our workforce, providing care to a family member or friend?

Employees of all ages are caring for, or may one day care for, a family member or friend who has a short- or long-term health condition, disability or aging-related need. Caregiving can take on many forms and levels of commitment. It can include providing regular or sporadic care to a family member or friend that may live with you, nearby, or far away. This type of unpaid care is not the same as parenting and regular child care, but it does include caring for children with serious illnesses or disabilities. Assisting a spouse to carry out activities of daily living at home, helping a neighbour get their groceries, or supporting a family member living in another city with medication management are just some examples of caregiving.

Balancing Work and Caregiving

As an employee and caregiver, you may face challenges trying to balance your work, your caregiving responsibilities and your own health and personal life. A good first step to help you manage your caregiving responsibilities is to plan ahead by thinking about possible next steps in your caregiving role, changes to the care recipient's living arrangements, or changes to the level or intensity of care required by the care recipient. If possible, share the caregiving duties with other family members and friends, and explore all available community supports and services.

You may, however, face challenges with regards to your caregiving that require your employer's support. If this is the case, you may wish to talk to your employer about possible workplace arrangements to help you better balance your work and caregiving responsibilities.



Why talk to your employer about your work and caregiving responsibilities?

- ❖ To help you maintain your employment-related responsibilities and your income.
- ❖ To help your employer better understand your caregiving obligations and how this might affect your work.
- ❖ To discuss and reduce job-related anxiety being caused by caregiving responsibilities.
- ❖ To establish clear expectations for your work performance.
- ❖ To show your employer that you have looked at all other options to provide the care and reduce the impact on your work.
- ❖ To find out how flexible your employer can be in accommodating your caregiving responsibilities.
- ❖ To make use of the supports in your workplace, such as employee assistance programs¹ and flexible work arrangements.
- ❖ To develop a plan with your manager that will meet both your needs and your employer's needs.
- ❖ To set the stage for future conversations and solutions as your work requirements or caregiving responsibilities change over time.

¹ A program to identify, and provide, short-term counselling and referral services to employees with personal or work-related problems to resources within the work place or the community, when appropriate, and provide follow-up.

Prepare to talk to your employer about your work and caregiving responsibilities, and consider doing the following:

- ❖ Book an appointment to talk with your employer or immediate manager.
- ❖ Assess the impact of your caregiving role on your work responsibilities and the impact of your job on your personal life, including your caregiving responsibilities, in order to avoid stress and burnout.
- ❖ Be realistic about potential future responsibilities. Caregiving tasks and time commitments can change depending on the health care needs of the person to whom you provide care.
- ❖ Consider workplace programs or services that could help you balance work and caregiving responsibilities, such as:
 - telework
 - vacation
 - personal days off
 - family leave
 - workplace wellness days
 - job sharing
 - leaves of absence (such as family caregiver leave)
 - employee assistance programs

- Lunch and Learn sessions on topics of interest to employed caregivers
 - support groups within your workplace
 - caregiver accommodation to provide end-of-life care (e.g. compassionate care leave)
- ❖ Check whether your workplace has any human resources policies that may apply to your situation. If you are a union member, you may also wish to review the terms of your existing collective agreement(s).
- ❖ Consult human rights laws and any applicable employment legislation for information and advice on accommodating employees with caregiving responsibilities.
- ❖ Recognize that protection from discrimination on the grounds of family status includes caregiving in most human rights codes. This protection comes with responsibilities for all parties, including the caregiver. For more information on this topic, you can read a Guide to Balancing Work and Caregiving Obligations published by the Canadian Human Rights Commission, available at **www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/guide-balancing-work-and-caregiving-obligations**.



How to talk to your employer

- ❖ Be clear about how your current caregiving responsibilities may impact your work.
- ❖ Explain the steps you have taken to prevent or minimize the impact of your caregiving responsibilities on your work.
- ❖ Ask for privacy, but be open to disclosing some details about your situation if it can help your employer to better understand how he or she can support you.
- ❖ Be open to other arrangements and be willing to work with your employer to find one that is acceptable to you both.
- ❖ Agree on a plan with your employer and revisit the plan regularly to ensure that it is still working for both of you.

General information and tips for caregivers of a family member or friend

❖ Plan ahead:

- talk openly with the person you are caring for and with the other helpers involved about expectations, roles, responsibilities, and possible next steps in the caregiving process. Understanding the needs and wishes of the person in your care will help you develop the best plan to meet both their needs and your own.

❖ Share the care:

- find ways to share caregiving responsibilities by identifying key people who can provide support with particular tasks. This could include other family members, neighbours and friends. Offer suggestions on how they can help reduce the demands on you.
- look into what home care, respite care and other community supports and services are available in your area.

❖ Take care of yourself:

- start with the basics, such as healthy eating, and getting enough sleep and exercise. Maintaining your physical, mental and emotional well-being is critical to balancing work and caregiving responsibilities.

Resources

- ❖ Information on federal, provincial and territorial government resources for caregivers is available at **Canada.ca/Caregivers**, by calling **1 800 O-Canada** or **TTY 1-800-926-9105**, or contact your provincial or territorial government.

Québec contributes to the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Seniors Forum by sharing expertise, information and best practices. However, it does not subscribe to, or take part in, integrated federal, provincial, and territorial approaches to seniors. The Government of Québec intends to fully assume its responsibilities for seniors in Québec.

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