

WORKING PARENT EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

A guide of best employer practices and policies in response to the findings of the working parent survey

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Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>REMOTE WORK POLICY.....</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>COMPANY CULTURE BEST PRACTICES.....</u>	<u>8</u>

Introduction

WORKING PARENTS SURVEY

In the spring of 2022, [Goodwill Industries of Southern Piedmont](#) and Charlotte Works conducted a survey of working parents in the greater Charlotte region to better understand how to support working parents in their return to the workforce after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey inquired about what matters most to them in terms of returning to the workforce and workplace satisfaction, and what employers can do to attract, retain and support working parents.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey found that 96.2% of respondents indicated that health and wellbeing was the factor that mattered most for working parents. The survey also revealed that 94% of parents would be willing to switch industries for a remote position and that 86% of parents are actively seeking a new job or are open to new opportunities. Additionally, the survey revealed that it's important for employers to create policies, practices and a culture that supports the needs of working parents as well as provide flexibility to employees, especially working mothers, who were 1.5 times more likely to spend an additional three or more hours a day on the “second shift” during the pandemic. This additional time spent on housework and caregiving was even greater for single mothers. The video below highlights other key survey findings and best practices for employers to respond to the survey findings. <https://youtu.be/87MygFomZ8o>

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

Rather than simply stating the current issues, we wanted to empower employers with resources that would enable them to easily take action in response to the survey findings to meet the needs of working parents. The Employer toolkit here contains two template policies and some best practice recommendations that employers can quickly implement if they want to improve talent attraction and retention for working parents.

Remote Work Policy

Purpose/Objective

[Company Name] understands that maximizing productivity, attracting and retaining top talent, and building a strong company culture necessitates a flexible working policy that strategically leverages hybrid and remote work. This policy has been informed by research from McKinsey¹, Stanford², and others³ that clearly demonstrate the feasibility of and benefits that can be realized from remote work. A review of these studies in comparison with the nature of our work has revealed that a large portion of work can be conducted virtually, and activities in-person are generally conducted off-site or virtually and do not necessitate a presence in the office. These guidelines are intended to provide a framework for determining what activities will be conducted in person and what activities will be conducted virtually. While these guidelines establish a framework for decision-making for all team members, unless otherwise specified in company policy, judgments of how to conduct various activities shall be at the discretion of managers. Team members will be required to meet the expectations established by managers.

Virtual Work

Virtual Work is defined as any job activity that can be done at the location of choice by the team member. [Company Name] considers Virtual Work to be a viable, flexible option when both the employee and the job are suited to such an arrangement. Virtual Work should be executed to the same standards applied to in-person activities. In their sole discretion, managers may require team members to comply with additional terms including but not limited to dress code compliance, camera presence, standard hours of availability as a condition of continued Virtual Work. The following nonexclusive list highlights the main factors that will be considered to determine if a team member's work, and activities are conducive to Virtual Work:

- **Individual/Specialized Tasks:** Team members working individually on tasks that do not require substantial collaboration or that require highly specialized skills
- **Resource Accessibility:** Necessary resources can be accessed virtually, and/or the team member has all essential equipment and resources available in their home office
- **Virtual Activities:** For all activities that are primarily virtual (zoom meetings, email, etc.)
- **Flexibility Required:** Activities that have logistical challenges being conducted in-person or require engagement with individuals with scheduling constraints

¹ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/whats-next-for-remote-work-an-analysis-of-2000-tasks-800-jobs-and-nine-countries>

² <https://nbloom.people.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj4746/f/wfh.pdf>

³ <https://www.apollotechnical.com/working-from-home-productivity-statistics/>

Exemptions to Virtual Work

New hires will be placed on a 60-day probationary period where they should anticipate all activities to be done in-person at the office. Managers may at their discretion elect to terminate or waive this probationary period at any time. Additionally, should a manager determine that a team member is not performing adequately remotely, the team member may be required to return to conduct these activities in-person until an acceptable remediation plan for a return to virtual work has been agreed to by the staff and manager.

In-Person Work

In-Person Work is defined as any job activity that must be done at the location of choice by the manager of organization. Staff are expected to be in the office and at meetings and activities when required by their supervisor and when virtual participation is not an option. At minimum, staff will be expected to attend a monthly in-person all staff meeting. Additional In-person requirements include any activities that cannot be reasonably performed remotely (e.g., Inventory, Office Management, Furniture moving, etc.). The following nonexclusive list highlights the main factors that will be considered to determine if a team member's work, while possible to conduct virtual, would benefit from being conducted In-Person:

- **Collaborative Activities:** Activities that are highly collaborative that require input and thought leadership from multiple team members
- **Culture Building:** Activities that serve the primary purpose of building internal team culture
- **Connection Building:** Necessary activities require a level of trust that has not yet been established
- **Convenience:** Activities where a majority of team members will be in the same location and establishing a virtual meeting would be more burdensome

Exceptions to In-Person Work

Any unforeseen circumstances preventing attendance at an in-person activity should be communicated to the team member's manager as soon as possible. Should a team member be unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, if practicable, team members will make reasonable accommodations for a hybrid format. Managers may consider temporary waivers of in-person requirements for team members with extenuating circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Additional waivers of in-person requirements authorizing defined periods of Virtual Work may be authorized in other company policies, and these policies shall take precedence over the language in this policy. In-person activities and requirements may be waived in a team member's employment agreement at the sole discretion of the manager.

Parental Leave Policy

Purpose/Objective

[Company Name] will provide up to [enter number] weeks of paid parental leave to employees following the birth of an employee's child or the placement of a child with an employee in connection with adoption or foster care. The purpose of paid parental leave is to enable the employee to care for and bond with a newborn or a newly adopted or newly placed child. This policy will run concurrently with Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave, as applicable.

Eligibility

Eligible employees must meet the following criteria:

- Have been employed with the company for at least 12 months (the 12 months do not need to be consecutive).
- Have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the date the leave would begin.
- Be a full- or part-time, regular employee (temporary employees and interns are not eligible for this benefit).

In addition, employees must meet one of the following criteria:

- Have given birth to a child.
- Be a spouse or committed partner of a woman who has given birth to a child.
- Have adopted a child or been placed with a foster child (in either case, the child must be age 17 or younger). The adoption of a new spouse's child is excluded from this policy.

Amount, Time Frame and Duration of Paid Parental Leave

- Eligible employees will receive a maximum of [enter number] weeks of paid parental leave per birth, adoption or placement of a child/children. The fact that a multiple birth, adoption or placement occurs (e.g., the birth of twins or adoption of siblings) does not increase the [enter number]-week total amount of paid parental leave granted for that event. In addition, in no case will an employee receive more than [enter number] weeks of paid parental leave in a rolling 12-month period, regardless of whether more than one birth, adoption or foster care placement event occurs within that 12-month time frame.

- Each week of paid parental leave is compensated at 100 percent of the employee's regular, straight-time weekly pay. Paid parental leave will be paid on a biweekly basis on regularly scheduled pay dates.
- Approved paid parental leave may be taken at any time during the 12-month period immediately following the birth, adoption, or placement of a child with the employee. Paid parental leave may not be used or extended beyond this 12-month time frame.
- In the event of a female employee who herself has given birth, the [*enter number*] weeks of paid parental leave will commence at the conclusion of any short-term disability leave/benefit provided to the employee for the employee's own medical recovery following childbirth.
- Employees must use all paid parental leave during the 12-month time frame indicated above. Any unused paid parental leave will be forfeited at the end of the 12-month period.
- Upon termination of the individual's employment at the company, he or she will not be paid for any unused paid parental leave for which he or she was eligible.

Coordination with Other Policies

- Paid parental leave taken under this policy will run concurrently with leave under the FMLA; thus, any leave taken under this policy that falls under the definition of circumstances qualifying for leave due to the birth or placement of a child due to adoption or foster care, the leave will be counted toward the 12 weeks of available FMLA leave per a 12-month period. All other requirements and provisions under the FMLA will apply. In no case will the total amount of leave—whether paid or unpaid—granted to the employee under the FMLA exceed 12 weeks during the 12-month FMLA period. Please refer to the Family and Medical Leave Policy for further guidance on the FMLA.
- After the paid parental leave (and any short-term disability leave for employees giving birth) is exhausted, the balance of FMLA leave (if applicable) will be compensated through employees' accrued sick, vacation and personal time. Upon exhaustion of accrued sick, vacation and personal time, any remaining leave will be unpaid leave. Please refer to the Family and Medical Leave Policy for further guidance on the FMLA.
- The company will maintain all benefits for employees during the paid parental leave period just as if they were taking any other company paid leave such as paid vacation leave or paid sick leave.

- If a company holiday occurs while the employee is on paid parental leave, such day will be charged to holiday pay; however, such holiday pay will not extend the total paid parental leave entitlement.
- If the employee is on paid parental leave when the company offers administrative leave (known as an “admin day”), that time will be recorded as paid parental leave. Administrative leave will not extend the paid parental leave entitlement.
- An employee who takes paid parental leave that does not qualify for FMLA leave will be afforded the same level of job protection for the period of time that the employee is on paid parental leave as if the employee were on FMLA-qualifying leave.
- Please refer to the Adoption Benefit Policy for additional information about other employee benefits related to the adoption process.

Requests for Paid Parental Leave

- The employee will provide his or her supervisor and the human resource department with notice of the request for leave at least 30 days prior to the proposed date of the leave (or if the leave was not foreseeable, as soon as possible). The employee must complete the necessary HR forms and provide all documentation as required by the HR department to substantiate the request.
- As is the case with all company policies, the organization has the exclusive right to interpret this policy.

Company Culture Best Practices

In addition to company policy change, 92.5% of survey respondents valued a strong company culture. The below list is a small sample of tangible items that can help create incremental change in company culture. Above all else listening to your employees and taking actionable steps in response to the feedback received is the most critical first step to establishing a strong workplace culture as this is not something that can be fixed overnight.

SURVEY / Have Conversations to Discover Gaps

Regularly engage and ask your employees over what gaps might exist in workplace practices or policies that create challenges for them.

ACTIONABLE RESPONSE to Feedback

Equally as important to getting this feedback is responding to the feedback even if it does not mean immediate tangible change. Employees must feel that the feedback is valued and considered, or they may not give future feedback.

Offer Benefits or PERKS TO PARENTS

The above policies are examples of perks that help parents feel supported at work. Other ideas may come out of the surveys or conversations with your employees.

Support WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

Flexible working hours are important for many parents with child pick up responsibilities or other personal matters that must be dealt with during the workday. This also means that employees are more available after hours if similar work emergencies arise.

SHARE RESOURCES That Support Working Parents

Resource List:

https://www.ncworks.gov/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/CRAG/Mecklenburg_County.pdf