

WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITIES

Guidance for Supervisors/Managers Assisting Employees with Childcare Needs

Many area K-12 students are engaging in virtual learning and childcare facilities are closed or have reduced capacity. UW–Madison understands that employees who are parents, guardians, or caregivers may face unprecedented challenges in balancing family and work responsibilities. To help support employees and to lessen these challenges, the university expects supervisors and managers to work together with employees to identify and offer workplace flexibilities. This will assist employees in balancing family care responsibilities while meeting the university's mission. Units, together with employees, may create a customized plan that meets both the employee's personal needs and the unit's business needs.

The guidance below provides an overview of what supervisors and managers can do if an employee has concerns about caring for a child due to in-home virtual learning or a lack of available childcare. If an employee has a medical or disability related concern, see Accommodations & Workplace Flexibilities: Supervisor/Manager Overview by visiting hr.wisc.edu/docs/covid19/accommodations-and-workplace-flexibilities-supervisor-overview.pdf.

What to do

Practice empathy and identify specific concerns. Every employee concern should be individually evaluated based on duties, work environment, and workplace needs. If you have questions or concerns about requests or options available to employees, you are encouraged to work closely with your school, college, or division human resources (HR) representative.

- **Ask**- Ask the employee to explain their situation in as general terms as possible.
- **Listen** - Listen carefully to the employee's answers.
- **Respond** - Depending on the answer the employee provides.

What not to discuss with employees

- Supervisors should avoid discussing medical information with employees.
- If an employee raises their own medical issues, supervisors/managers should let the employee know that they cannot discuss their medical information with them. Supervisors are to refer employees to their Divisional Disability Representative (DDR). To find your DDR visit employee disabilities.wisc.edu/divisional-disability-representatives-ddr/.
- Supervisors/managers cannot ask or discuss information about an employee's family member's health.

Workplace flexibilities

Requests need to be balanced with workplace needs. Some examples of modifications may include:

- **Telecommuting** - Allow the employee to work remotely (may be part of reassignment).
- **Options for a flexible workplace** - Including but not limited to the following:

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- **Job share/split** - Job sharing is an arrangement between two part-time employees which splits the responsibility of one regular, full-time position. For example, two employees work 50 percent (20 hours per week per employee) to accomplish the work of one full-time position. This arrangement provides organizational benefits such as less absences and allows each employee to use their unique skills and experience. *A full-time employee who enters a job-sharing arrangement, with a reduction in the percent of time worked, should contact the benefits office for their school, college or division to confirm their benefits do not change.*
- **Alternative work week** - An alternative work week plan allows a full-time employee to work the required 40 hours per week in fewer than five-full days. Unlike flextime, hours are standardized by an agreement between the employee and supervisor. (For flextime, an employee may vary their work schedule daily around core hours of operation.) An example of an alternative workweek is a four-day, 40-hour work week (four 10-hour days).
- **Variable hours** - Employees may use this option to permanently change their start and end times to adjust for personal situations such as riding in a carpool or childcare needs due to the pandemic. Variable hours, unlike flextime, are fixed schedules that are different from the standard work unit schedule. Variable hours may include early mornings, evenings, and/or weekend hours. In most situations, employees and supervisors can work together to develop schedules that cover the main hours of operation.
- **Reassignment** - Units may temporarily reassign employees to different duties or shifts to meet the employee's needs and the unit's business needs.
- **Leave of absence** - Employees may qualify for a paid or unpaid leave of absence. This includes the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Wisconsin's Family and Medical Leave Act (WFMLA), or Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) including the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA) or the Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLEA). For more information visit hr.wisc.edu/covid19/emergency-leave/.
- **Use earned leave** - Employees can check their leave balances on the Time and Absence App on My UW or at my.wisc.edu where they log hours or furlough and submit absence requests.
- **Voluntary leave without pay (VLWOP)/Voluntary FTE reduction** - There may be benefit impacts with VLWOP and voluntary FTE Reduction. Consult with your school, college, or division HR in this process.

Considerations for workplace flexibilities

- What arrangement is the employee proposing?
- Do you expect other employee requests? How will you review and consider them as a group?
- Are you considering all employee requests consistently or in the same way?
- How can the arrangement continue to support and fulfill business needs?
- Does the arrangement require adjustments in the workloads of others?

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- Can this be accommodated within the team or by other means?
- Will the arrangement impact the team? If so, how can it be resolved?
- Does the unit have the resources to make the arrangement work (technology/communication) or is there a reasonable alternative?
- How will the arrangement be reviewed? When and how will the arrangement be measured for success?
- Under what terms could the university, supervisor/manager, or employee end the arrangement?
- If the proposed arrangement will not work, are there any other types of flexible working arrangements that could be made? Could it work partially?
- What checkpoints will be put in place to ensure that deadlines are met and work is accurately completed?
- What are the challenges and how will they be overcome?

For more information contact smartrestartHR@ohr.wisc.edu

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