

Back to School Brings New Challenges



Schools are starting to reopen across the United States and the country is divided on if K-12 students should return to the classroom this fall. Even if a majority of schools do reopen this fall, there is still no guarantee that they'll stay open throughout the semester [as one school in Indianapolis](#) had to be closed because of one of the faculty members testing positive for COVID-19.

This has put employees who are parents in a bind as many of them rely on their children going to school while they would go to work. Parents are going to have to make hard decisions in the near future as there isn't a clear way to go forward on this issue. This is where employers can step in to help lessen the burden of their employees by offering creative solutions, empathy, and flexibility during these uncertain times.



What Employers Can Do for Parents

Fortunately working parents have received a bit of help when Congress passed the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (FFCRA) earlier in the year. FFCRA allows for 10 weeks of family leave when childcare is not available due to COVID-19, the program also allows for a tax credit to be collected for employers.

Parents taking time off is only a temporary solution though, so how can employers step in and help balance work and homeschooling? We've put together some ideas on how you can help your employees during this time:

Starting a Dialogue with Working Parents— Taking the time now to reach out to your working parents is a great way to see where they need help. Not every parent's burden is equal and some of them may need more help than others. Check with them to see if their children's school is reopening or if you need to work with them on finding a solution.

Develop a Remote-Work Policy— The pandemic has brought a wave of work from home solutions, and if you haven't already then now is a great time to develop a remote-work policy. Establishing which employees can work from home, what hours they're supposed to work, and when conferences and business calls are going to happen can help build some structure for the parents that need to stay home for their kids.

Be Flexible with Working Hours— The traditional 9 to 5 is out the window with remote work, especially when taking care of children is involved. This is where you can be more accommodating with your employees by working around their schedules with their children.

Create an Accommodating Workplace— It may seem like accommodating every employee may hinder productivity, in the long run it can help it by creating loyal employees and keeping morale up in an already stressful time. Your working parents just want to keep their kids safe and ahead, and a little goes a long way when working with them.

Issues for Employers

Not accommodating working parents can also bring potential legal issues for employers, remember the FFCRA? Employers that deny qualifying employees leave that they are entitled to may be sued in private litigation, as well as the Department of Labor. Employers would be subject to unpaid wages listed under the act, as well as potential legal fees.

Local and state laws have also been passed to provide protection for working parents too, so its best to learn what your business needs to offer your employees under the law. Not to mention the morale hit that the rest of your employees when they see how unaccommodating you can be during a pandemic.

The fall will be uncertain for most businesses and their employees, but by taking the time now your business can be prepared to help its employees. By being flexible during this crisis you can demonstrate real leadership while keeping your employees safe.

Do you need help working with employees during these uncertain times? It can seem like a nightmare having to handle all the aspects of the business during a pandemic. Take the burden out of HR by partnering with Pinnacle so you can focus on your business and employees!