

A photograph of the Columbus, Ohio skyline at dusk. The sky is a deep blue, and the city lights are beginning to glow. In the foreground, there is a body of water, likely the Scioto River, with a walkway and some trees. The background is filled with various skyscrapers and office buildings.

COLUMBUS **WOMEN'S** **COMMISSION**

**SUMMARY OF THEMES FROM JULY 21 2020
BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS**

OVERVIEW

BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS

Two virtual sessions were held with adopters of The Columbus Commitment. The sessions **explored strategies for employers to explore as they support employees navigating school and work challenges in the current environment.**

Each session had two smaller breakout sessions which were focused on the realities of working at home while kids are participating in virtual school or unable to attend their traditional childcare. The groups discussed solutions and policy changes employers could implement to support employees during this difficult time.

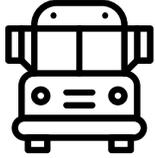
The businesses represented were diverse, with a a combination of company sizes and employee types.



The notes from the sessions were used to identify key struggles faced by employees and the strategies that employers can implement to support their employees.

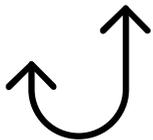
KEY CHALLENGES SUMMARY

Childcare



Childcare is a Full-Time Job

Without school/childcare, many feel like they have taken on another full-time job (regular 9-5, being a mother, and now being a teacher); loss of services they had access too & filling the gap themselves is problem to solve for



Equity in Childcare

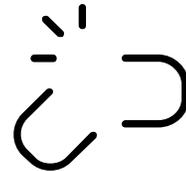
Very different for hourly vs. salaried employees; much more of a struggle for hourly employees; hourly employees also under more pressure to cut back hours which decreases pay; no one size fits all approach

Remote Work



Untransferable skills

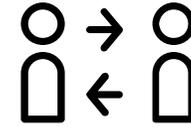
Challenges of remote work is that not everyone is able to have/get a job that provides work that can be done from home. Majority of positions that can be flexible usually require higher education as well. Employers struggle to provide alternative work.



Challenge to Fulfill Job Responsibilities

Many hold jobs where role is heavily skewed to face-to-face interactions; challenges in performing job remotely; struggling to make impact / feel like they're delivering results; workers who must be in person are at high risk of leaving or losing job esp. with kids being home in the fall

Other Barriers



Breakdown of Social Connections

Feel disconnected from the struggles of others; isolated; uncertain of prevailing moods or short and mid-term plans of their employers / organizations; causing anxiety over uncertain plans for employers



Productivity Misconceptions

Just as productive at home for some; skewed as most remote workers are higher skilled workers; low-mid skill workers struggling as they are more likely to be working in person (COVID risk) or furloughed

FLEXIBILITY

EFFECTIVELY MANAGING THE BARRIERS CREATED BY COVID AND RAPIDLY SCALE PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY TO HELP ENABLE ACCESS TO WORK



WHAT TO FOCUS ON...

REMOTE WORK

Help women transition or upskill into more advanced/digitally enabled roles. Invest in programs to **boost labor mobility**.

SELECTIVE HOURS

Allow employees to collaborate with family, spouse, & other employees to **set available time**.

JOB SHARING

Promote employees of the same occupation to work together to **allocate shift needs**.

NEXT STEPS...

Action Items to Explore:

- Job Sharing programs/Family matching
- Redefine productivity
- Help transition back into work or train to enable more transferable skills
- Remove or soften penalties for those employees who cannot telework; do not punish those arriving late or who must leave early

WHAT WE HEARD....

“Don’t care **when** you get your work done, as long as it gets done”

“Employers should be providing programs for women to help bridge this gap to **reenter the workforce**”

“**Buddy systems** between families where someone has morning duty and another family has afternoon session”

“Let **people decide** how much they want to work each week and when”

CHILDCARE

EFFECTIVELY CREATING ALTERNATIVES TO EMPLOYEES WHO NEED CHILDCARE TO WORK AND ENABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES



WHAT TO FOCUS ON...

PARTNERSHIPS

Creating partnerships with university's educational, social work and medical programs to help **provide support to parents**. (ex. Micro-schools)

OUTSOURCED CARE/ SHARED RESOURCES

Create childcare **options in office** that support all/part of the day.
Help **identify care personnel** to be "on call" or service that can watch children.

NEXT STEPS...

Action Items to Explore:

- Partnering with university education programs to help kids learning at home
- Having a pre-set list of babysitters for employees to utilize
- Partnerships with childcare agencies
- Establish communication about childcare prior to the return of workers to the physical office space.
- Continue or expand work-from-home flexibility

WHAT WE HEARD....

"**Providing nanny service**, holding a "school setting" in a conference room at the office"

"Universities with education students, they pump out future teachers and caregivers. Businesses should **explore relationships** with them"

"Some residents doing clinical trials **babysat** doctor and nurses children"

"Several **daycares on site** to help"

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

ACKNOWLEDGING THE FINANCIAL SHORTCOMINGS CREATED BY COVID AND ASSISTING THOSE UNABLE TO PROVIDE



WHAT TO FOCUS ON...

GRANTS

Help **push grants** for public sector funding for childcare assistance.

PAID LEAVE/ SUPPORT

Promote employees and leadership to **donate leave** like PTO/sick leave/and vacation.

Allow for **more leave** in general, including Paid Family Leave .

NEXT STEPS...

Action Items to Explore:

- Allowing employees to “buy” more leave or allowing others to donate their available leave
- Creating funds that could go toward supporting mothers with reduced hours or covering extra childcare costs
- Employees can apply for grants to access funds or relax criteria for existing funds
- Consider creating an employee emergency fund

WHAT WE HEARD....

“Take most advantage of stimulus and **relief programs**”

“*Buying* more vacation time or **donating vacation time** to those who might need it”

“Offer **cash stipend** to support childcare costs”

“Employee financial assistance **grant program**”

COMMUNITY

EFFECTIVELY MANAGING THE BARRIERS CREATED BY COVID AND RAPIDLY SCALE PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY TO HELP ENABLE ACCESS TO WORK



WHAT TO FOCUS ON...

MENTAL HEALTH

Facilitated sessions and programs to **decrease stress** and to control the burnt-out feeling.

ERGS/ SUPPORT GROUPS

Sessions for employees to **stay connected** and communicate struggles. Identify actionable items to get desired **balance**.

NEXT STEPS...

Action Items to Explore:

- Creating an ERG in the office for moms to support moms
- Hiring a professional to provide support to employees
- Encouraging employees to speak up and make an engaging environment to speak about what they are going through
- Consider creating a virtual series where senior leadership can answer questions and share updates to engage with front line employees on a regular basis

WHAT WE HEARD....

“Groups of women with similarities (kids or jobs), to become **built in support systems**”

“Got a Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) **coach** on retainer for staff who does 30 minute sessions ”

“Having a director in **charge of mental health** - scheduling meditation, virtual yoga, tips and tricks, posting on an internal board, etc”

“working on connectivity and access for people”

Thank you for your partnership!



PLAYBOOK IN PROGRESS...

We are taking the ideas we heard in July, adding relevant research, case studies and additional employer resources and will be distributing this to the Columbus Commitment Community.

We invite Adopters to join us for another invitation-only conversation on August 20 to continue the discussion and to learn from one another. If you weren't able to join us in July or want to continue the dialogue, join us and RSVP for our upcoming event [here](#)

