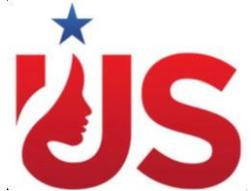




Back to School Playbook for Employers

**Columbus Women's
Commission**



August 2020

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A MESSAGE FROM THE WOMENS COMMISSION

From its inception, the Columbus Women’s Commission has made gender and racial equity in the workplace a key priority in advancing the economic well-being of women across our community. This year, the COVID-19 pandemic has made us more aware than ever of the disparities that exist in our community and, in particular, the significant impact of these disparities on women.

- Women are more likely to be “essential workers” – those working on the frontlines in the face of COVID-19 – including child care, health care, and grocery store workers.
- Women are over-represented in the industries most at risk of losing jobs as a result of COVID-19 – including restaurants, retail, and hotels.
- Even before the pandemic struck, women comprised nearly two-thirds of low-wage workers (jobs paying \$11.50/hour or less). These jobs are less likely to offer needed family supports such as paid leave, health insurance or childcare.

And we know that many women in our community may be forced out of the workplace as they juggle their childcare needs and work.

Our Columbus Commitment: Achieving Pay Equity work supports local employers who have signed the pledge to help close the gender and racial wage gap and address workplace policies that limit economic opportunity for women. We have engaged and convened more than 270 local employers committed to building gender equitable workplaces.

In July 2020, the Women’s Commission facilitated conversations to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on women in the workplace and learned there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution for every parent, let alone for every company. We released a summary of these working sessions and realized that employers wanted more ideas and opportunities for information sharing.

As a result, the Columbus Women’s Commission compiled a playbook for local business leaders to provide potential workplace policies, programs and solutions to support their working families. This playbook includes research and best practices from Columbus Commitment adopters and demonstrates to us that the Columbus community is rising to the unique challenges COVID-19 has presented to employers and employees alike.

It is our hope that this playbook will inform and inspire flexible, innovative workplace policies. We encourage central Ohio employers to collaborate with families so parents can fulfill both their parenting and work commitments.

Thank you,



Shannon Ginther
Chair, Columbus Women’s Commission

**22% of
parents say
they’re going to
reduce hours to
help with remote
learning.**

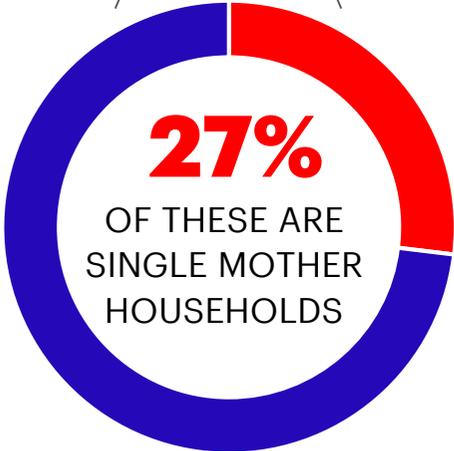
THE IMPACT OF COVID ON THE FEMALE WORKFORCE



COLUMBUS FAMILIES NEED SOLUTIONS FOR WORK AND SCHOOL

1 in 3

HOUSEHOLDS IN THE COLUMBUS METRO AREA HAVE A CHILD UNDER 18 AT HOME



Nationally, only **35%** of parents in households with children report the ability to telework.

Only **20%** of single parents reported being able to telework.

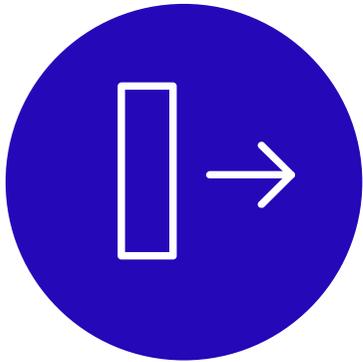
NOT EVERYONE CAN WORK REMOTELY

Top 10 Occupations For Women In Columbus Metro Area	Portion Of Work That Can Be Done Remotely
1. Registered Nurse	Low
2. Secretary or Administrative Assistant	Mid
3. Customer service representative	Mid
4. Elementary and middle school teacher	Mid
5. Nursing, psychiatric or home health aide	Low
6. Cashier	Mid
7. Manager	Industry dependent
8. Waitress	Low
9. Retail Salesperson	Mid
10. Accountant or Auditor	High

**APPROXIMATELY
30% OF THE
FEMALE
WORKFORCE IN
COLUMBUS
WORKS IN THESE
10 OCCUPATIONS**

Sources: American Community Survey 2018, ONET

JUGGLING CHILD CARE, SCHOOLING AND WORK IS TAKING ITS TOLL



1 in 5

Working parents said they or their partners are considering leaving the workforce to take care of children.



10X

As many working moms are taking primary responsibility for distance learning than working dads.

Sources: Invest in Parents, Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Inequality, Stellar Reviews

DECISIONS NOW WILL IMPACT WOMEN'S FUTURE EARNINGS

**EVEN JUST ONE
YEAR OUT OF WORK
IMPACTS WOMEN'S
FUTURE EARNINGS**

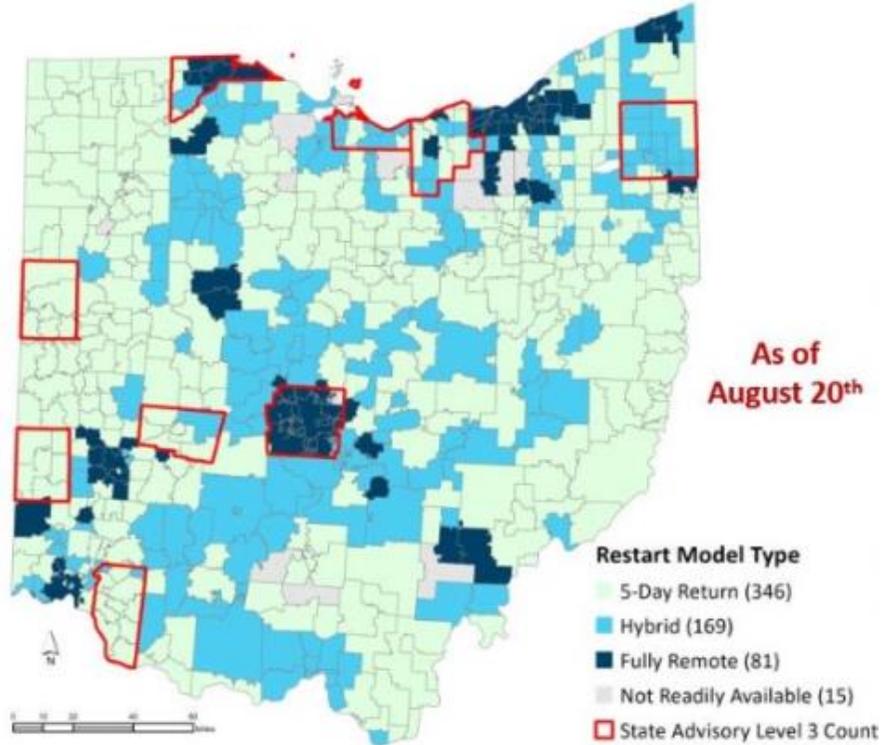
**WOMEN WHO TOOK JUST
ONE YEAR OFF BETWEEN
2001 AND 2015 HAD
ANNUAL EARNINGS THAT
WERE 39% LOWER THAN
WOMEN WHO HAD
WORKED ALL 15 YEARS.**

RETURN TO SCHOOL IN CENTRAL OHIO



RETURN TO SCHOOL PLANS VARY BY DISTRICT AND EMPLOYEES COULD HAVE KIDS ON DIFFERENT SCHEDULES

EDUCATION MODEL PLANNED FOR START OF SY21



OF THE 60 DISTRICTS IN THE COLUMBUS METRO AREA:

- **15 DISTRICTS WILL ONLY OFFER VIRTUAL/REMOTE LEARNING**
- **30 DISTRICTS, MAINLY OUTSIDE OF THE CORE URBAN AREA, WILL START THE DISTRICT IN PERSON**
- **15 DISTRICTS WILL OFFER HYBRID LEARNING, WITH STUDENTS IN SCHOOL FOR 2-3 DAYS AND REMOTE FOR 2-3 DAYS**



THIS MEANS THAT EMPLOYEES WHO ARE PARENTS MAY HAVE KIDS HOME 5 DAYS A WEEK, 2-3 DAYS A WEEK OR MAY HAVE FLUCTUATING SCHEDULES WHILE KIDS ARE HOME.

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN HELP



**Not all
employers have
a plan for
employees that
have children at
home**

Businesses must create a dedicated plan to support working parents, both men and women, or risk losing part of their workforce.

Despite many schools going fully virtual for the fall, only **32% of organizations that are planning to return to work have outlined child-care plans**

Among companies that have already returned to the office, **42% do not have a dedicated plan to help employees balance child-care and work**

****22%** of small companies (1-99 employees) plan to grant accommodations to all employees who request them versus **9%** of large companies (500+ employees)**

DURING OUR LISTENING SESSIONS, WE HEARD THAT COLUMBUS EMPLOYERS ARE EXPLORING...

WORK FLEXIBILITY



REMOTE WORK

SELECTIVE HOURS

JOB SHARING

CHILDCARE



PARTNERSHIPS

OUTSOURCED CARE

SHARED RESOURCES

FINANCIAL SUPPORT



GRANTS

PAID LEAVE

PAID SUPPORT

COMMUNITY



MENTAL HEALTH

EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

SUPPORT GROUPS

The following slides offer best practices and strategies as employers seek to support parents struggling with children at home and work.



Throughout this deck, examples of solutions from small/medium sized businesses are marked with a lightbulb

OFFERING WORK FLEXIBILITY

82% of parents working from home agree that currently their employer is offering increased flexibility

86% of parents working from home put high priority on employers providing flexible work schedules



Small Business Example: Ellevate Network

- Instituted flex work hours to allow employees to work in shifts outside of standard 9-5 to accommodate caretaking throughout the day
- The 20-person company also created Slack icons to easily indicate if someone is on childcare duty and may be slow to respond

Important Considerations

Support the Home Office

- If possible, companies should **provide a stipend** to help support transition to remote work
- Stipends should address not only home office supplies, but also streaming services, books, toys, or other supplies to keep young children occupied and entertained
- Assure that employee households **have the needed internet bandwidth to support remote work and online schooling for children**

Equitable Treatment

- Work flexibility must be made available to both mothers and fathers equally
- Efforts must be taken to ensure that **remote employees are treated equally and given the same opportunities** as employees that can be in the office
- Ensure that all meetings have an inclusive virtual component

Adjust Expectations

- Adjust expectations to address additional stress for parents
- Be open to **adjusting timing of recurring meetings** to accommodate parents with children at home

ADJUSTING PERFORMANCE METRICS & EXPECTATIONS

Many working parents feel overwhelmed and worry that their performance is slipping

46% of parents working from home said that they face unrealistic expectations from their employer.

63% agree that the demands of work and home will be unsustainable in the coming weeks and months.



Small Business Example: Ellevate Network

- After hearing feedback indicating uncertainty around performance expectations, the CEO redefined goals about what a successful employee looks like during these difficult times.
- **"There's a lot of unknowns. There's a lack of confidence and fear of stigma,"** CEO, Kristy Wallace says.

Employers Need to Provide Clear Communication & Empathy

- Employers can help by establishing and clearly communicating more realistic work goals
- In an April 2020 APCO survey, 84% of working parents believe **clear communication on expectations** are important to helping them handle this situation.
- Employers must **lead with empathy and compassion**, ensuring that working parents feel confident asking for what they need to perform their best given the current situation

PROVIDING CHILDCARE OPTIONS

The IRS lets companies **claim 10 - 25%** of the cost when they set up a day care center or subsidize their employees' childcare expenses in other ways.

Backup Care

- Even before COVID-19, personalized backup care for parents or other caregivers was growing in popularity as an employer-provided perk, with nearly **1 in 5 employers** offering it in early 2020.

Concierge or Referral Services

- One of the fastest-growing solutions employers are embracing are concierge services that partner employees with a coordinator who finds a child-care provider that's the right fit for each worker.
- Membership to a concierge service or a subsidy to offset cost of care can be a **more cost-effective solution.**

Important Considerations

If there is a backup childcare option available today:

- How are they meeting health and safety needs?
- Can backup care benefits be expanded?
- What options are available after the backup visits are exhausted?

If there is not a backup childcare option available today:

- Who are the vendors? How do I vet options, and how quickly can I implement a benefit?
- Will they have the supply to meet the demand and meet health and safety needs?

Example: Contec

- Contec's board is considering setting up a program for their sales team, which is based across the nation but is not currently visiting clients amid the pandemic, to take sabbaticals and work in childcare to help their communities
- Contec is also considering adopting a local day-care facility or two, particularly those that may be in dire financial situations

PROVIDING SPECIAL PAID LEAVE PROGRAMS

85% of parents working at home put high priority on employers ensuring employees have paid time off/sick leave during this time.

According to a recent survey, only **19%** of employers had paid caregiving leave in place, outside of paternity/bonding leave. **23%** of employers intend to offer paid caregiving leave in 2021.

Avenues to expand paid leave programs:

- Providing equitable paid leave policies across all levels of the organization and to **both men and women**
- Increasing the number of weeks of paid leave (whether partial or full pay) available for employees with children
- **Expanding eligibility requirements** for paid family leave to include caring for one's child when schools are remote
- Creating a **paid family/medical leave fund**
 - Employers can create their own pooled fund where employers and employees pay small amounts so that workers can receive some financial assistance when they need time off beyond any time off policies offered by their organization
- Helping employees take advantage of Federal Family Leave and navigate the application process if they qualify

Example: Contec

- Contec created its own version of the paid leave program included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act
- Employees that have been with the company for at least six months are entitled to six weeks of pandemic emergency child-care leave
- The company will pay them two-thirds of their salary during this time off, up to \$5,000, through the end of the year. Employees who have worked for Contec for a year or more can get double that: 12 weeks, or up to \$10,000 in paid time off
- 10% of parents have already taken advantage of the program.

ENCOURAGING ONGOING DIALOGUE & SUPPORT

Rather than top-down solutions, companies should focus on maintaining open communication with employees to support their needs.

Different employees will have different needs

- Some may need to start their workdays later or end earlier
- Others may need days where they have no meetings
- Some might need to block hours of time on their calendar to manage childcare

Communicate Frequently with Employees

- Working parents must be assured that however they need to manage their schedules, they have the support of their colleagues and management
- HR should regularly be in touch with working parents to ensure they have everything they require to stay productive
- Employers can reach out to employees with school-age children now to understand what accommodations they may need in advance of the fall term
- A platform for parents to share resources and commiserate can create a sense of support and community

Mental Health Support

Employees, especially parents, are under unprecedented levels of stress. Organizations can support their workforce by providing accessible mental health resources to employees AND their families.

- Telehealth and telebehavioral resources
- Employee assistance programs (EAPs)
- Mindfulness or stress-reducing programs and coaching
- Meditation app subscriptions
- Apps and online resources to support mental health, remote learning, and physical activity
- Virtual exercise classes
- Parent support groups

ENCOURAGING ONGOING DIALOGUE & SUPPORT

Companies should consider appointing a person or a committee to vet ideas and feedback from employees. There are many creative ways companies can support parents.



Small Business Example: Transfix

- The team used a #Transfixparents **channel on their company Slack for parents** to share ideas, useful articles, and other resources to help parents juggle both childcare and their professional responsibilities
- The channel created a place to vent about their new circumstances and to tell jokes
- Slack is also a good place for **reminders about existing resources** available through the company's benefit plans, such as mental health, childcare, and other family care offerings

Example: Acuity

Acuity covered costs for employees to enroll children in a virtual summer camp program, TheCampCloud.



Small Business Example: Maven

Maven hosted **whole-family virtual events** for employees including

- A "Halloween" kids costume contest
- Family Bingo
- Remote karaoke



Small Business Example: Shipstation

- Began **offering its employees DashPass**, a paid subscription to the DoorDash food-delivery service that waives delivery fees on takeout orders to save parents time / money feeding their families
- **Hosted activities** for its staff's kids at home to keep them entertained and busy, such as a magic show, webinars, and virtual lunches with characters such as Elsa from Disney's Frozen

PROVIDING SCHOOLING SUPPORT

Many parents are finding that helping children with online school is nearly a second job. Employers can offer support by helping parents access e-learning resources for their children.

Provide Employees with Resources

- Identify and communicate free resources that are available to employees through their community (i.e. public library programs)
- Pay for **tutoring service memberships** for employees to offset costs of these services
- Establish partnerships with local tutoring organizations or school groups (i.e. high school honor societies, middle school tutoring programs)
- Create a forum or tool within the company to match parents of young children that may need help with schoolwork to parents of older children that could benefit from tutoring experience

Facilitate Small Learning Groups Across Families

- Families can team up to share the work and allow children safe company in a **home-school co-op, microschool, or learning pod**
 - In some cases, parents even hire a teacher to help their cluster of students
 - Learning pods are being pursued as a solution by schools in Denver to improve remote education
 - Employees are exploring pandemic pods where a small group of families hires one in-person teacher to help their children
- Employers can **create a platform** to match groups of children so that they can set up group study arrangements (either online or in person with precautions)
- Employers can facilitate learning pods by **offsetting the cost of a teacher or platform**

BUSINESSES ARE JUST STARTING TO FIND WAYS TO SUPPORT WORKING PARENTS

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES INCLUDE:



Flexible work schedules & maintaining open dialogue about work schedules



Enabling remote work



Providing childcare options and aid



Special paid leave programs



Adjusted performance metrics and expectations



Hosting whole-family virtual events



Creating an open forum for parents to share experiences and crowdsource support ideas



Learning support for school-aged children such as tutoring

**BE A PART OF
THE CHANGE**



GET INVOLVED IN THE CONVERSATION

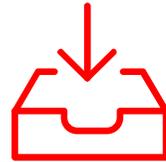
The Columbus Commitment is a voluntary and employer-led initiative. Together, we learn and find best practices for building gender equitable workplaces. The intent is to share best practices and experiences with other signatories in order to improve our community's overall gender and race-based wage gap and achieve pay equity. We know Columbus thrives when 100% of our residents have the opportunity to succeed.



Thank you, Accenture for partnering with us to make this happen!



We hope you'll join us in signing **The Columbus Commitment: Achieving Pay Equity**.



Visit Columbus.gov/payequity to learn more about pay equity, download the pledge packet and sign the Columbus Commitment



To learn more and see the current list of adopters, connect with us online:

www.columbus.gov/womenscommission



CBUSWomen



CBUSWomen



The
**Columbus
Commitment**

Achieving Pay Equity

