

Caregiving's Impact Growing in Importance to Employers, Says Northeast Business Group on Health

NEW YORK, JULY 20, 2017 – Caregiving ranks among the top ten employee health and wellness benefits priorities for most employers, says a new survey by Northeast Business Group on Health (NEBGH) in collaboration with AARP. Furthermore, among employers who say caregiving is not a top priority, most are aware of the issue but unable to address it. More than three-quarters of employers surveyed agree that caregiving will grow in importance to their companies over the next five years.

NEBGH surveyed benefits managers from 129 mostly large U.S. employers to measure current workplace attitudes toward caregiving and provide employers with a way of assessing their organizations when it comes to being “caregiving friendly.” Respondents cite increased productivity, decreased absenteeism and reduced healthcare costs – in that order – as the top drivers that would make a compelling case for investment in caregiving benefits, programs and services.

“Caregiving as a benefits issue is on the radar of most employers, but there is wide variation in the support employers provide for employee-caregivers,” said Laurel Pickering, President and CEO of NEBGH. “Many of the 40 mostly large NEBGH-member employers headquartered in or near NYC that responded to our survey provide programs tailored to caregivers in addition to leave time that can be used for caregiving, but other employers may not. Employers cite absence of employer benchmarks and best practices for caregiving, lack of financial resources and lack of data to identify caregivers, as the greatest barriers to becoming more caregiving friendly.”

Most employers surveyed permit employees to use sick, vacation or personal days for caregiving but fewer than half have programs designed specifically for caregivers such as caregiver support groups or counseling services. The same is true for subsidized in-home back-up care for those being cared for. In addition, workplace access to free or low-cost workplace resources supporting caregivers is made available by a minority of employers. For those offering benefits, awareness among employees about the benefits available for caregivers is low – and an overwhelming number of survey respondents say employees are only “somewhat” or “not very” aware.

“Family caregiving is an issue that affects the vast majority of us. We are either caregivers now, have been in the past, will be in the future or will need care ourselves,” said AARP Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer Nancy LeaMond. “Of today’s 40 million family caregivers, 24 million are juggling caregiving responsibilities and employment. By recognizing and supporting their needs, employers can improve productivity and foster a stable and healthy workforce. It is great to see so many leading employers open to understanding this issue better, and we are pleased to be working together to help America’s family caregivers.”

When asked what's on top of their caregiving wish list, employers cite expanded leave policies and coaching, and wellness or support services designed specifically for caregivers. More than three out of four employers indicate they're interested in providing digital tools to employees, yet few currently offer these tools.

“Our aging population means that more employees – and millennials specifically – will be providing some type of help to sick or immobile loved ones, from preparing meals and providing transportation to doctors' appointments, to performing more onerous responsibilities,” said Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH, and Executive Director of NEBGH's Solutions Center. “The implications of this trend are significant not only for workplace productivity but for employee population health and healthcare costs – caregivers tend to abandon their own physical and emotional needs and employers need to plan for how to respond.”

About the Survey: NEBGH's survey includes 76 employers with more than 5,000 employees, 40 with 1,000 to 5,000, and 13 with less than 1,000. The survey participants are located in the Northeast and Midwest, in Florida and California, and in the Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston and Memphis areas. The survey is funded by AARP, which provides extensive information, resources and advocacy on caregiving (www.aarp.org/caregiving). NEBGH issued an initial report on caregiving in the workplace in March 2017, and will release additional tools for employers in the coming months in collaboration with AARP.

About NEBGH: NEBGH is an employer-led coalition of healthcare leaders and other stakeholders with the mission of empowering members to drive excellence in health and achieve the highest value in healthcare delivery and the consumer experience. The Solutions Center is NEBGH's research and discovery platform for identifying the most promising, innovative opportunities for improving health outcomes, focused on employers as the catalyst for change.

About AARP: AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

Access the survey [HERE](#).

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