

Retirement Readiness Report

Helping older employees get ready to retire successfully

A free report for employers, unions, and pension funds, produced by RetirementWORKS®, Inc.

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Welcome to the thirty-sixth issue of the *Retirement Readiness Report*, offered as a free resource, to help you think about how your organization supports the transition into retirement.

We encourage you to contact us at any time if you have ideas, criticisms, or other comments about this publication, or wish to update your email address (or be added to or removed from the list).

If you missed issues #1 thru #35:

They're available at:

<http://www.retirementworks2.com/support.asp?id=newsletter>

Next month:

Retiring Broke

Caregiving issues

Caregiving is a huge issue for many employees, but especially older ones.

If you're in Human Resources, you may see this (or hear about it from your colleagues) pretty often. An employee is having attendance problems, or is losing productivity, or maybe has become irritable with others for no apparent reason. But then it comes out: she (or less often, he) has a sick or disabled spouse or child or parent or other relative in need of significant care. Or worse, a valuable employee has to leave the job altogether in order to be a full-time caregiver.

This is bad news for you, if you represent the employer, but it is much worse news for the employee. Two reports issued this summer highlight the problem. *Valuing the Invaluable: 2011 Update – The Growing Contributions and Costs of Family Caregiving*, from AARP, claims that in 2009 (the most recent year analyzed), **42.1 million people** in the U.S. provided care at some point in the year to an adult who needed help with at least one activity of daily living. *The MetLife Report on Caregiving Costs to Working Caregivers: Double Jeopardy for Baby Boomers Caring for Their Parents* estimates the average cost to an employee who has to leave work to become a caregiver is **nearly \$325,000** . from lost wages, lost Social Security benefits, and lost pension benefits.

So this is no small or rare phenomenon. The cost to employees, and retired employees, is not just financial, of course. Caregiving requires enormous sacrifice, not only in time, but in performing often unpleasant tasks at which the caregiver has no training and little experience. It involves scaling a huge learning curve that involves insurance companies, medical facilities, government agencies, suppliers of products and services for the disabled, respite workers, and so on. It means

dealing with one's own grief and fears, not to mention all of one's other needs and responsibilities, at the same time. It often requires superhuman patience and tolerance with the pain and emotions (and sometimes the personality changes) of the person who needs care. The load can be crippling.

It's in your organization's interest, as well as the interest of each employee who is affected, that caregivers get as much knowledge and support as you can provide. It's not just a matter of insurance benefits, it's a matter of knowing how to cope with an extremely difficult new situation, for which there has often been no preparation whatsoever.

Such assistance could be included as part of a Retirement Readiness program, or it could be done separately, if preferred.

The most typical situation for caregivers who are actively employed, and who are providing care on a long-term basis, is that the care is for an elderly parent or parent-in-law, and these situations arise most frequently when employees are in their fifties and

early sixties . that is, about the same time most of them are at least thinking seriously about retirement.

In addition, many of them will have caregiving responsibilities *after* they retire . possibly still involving parents, but more likely a spouse.

How can a Retirement Readiness program help you help them?

“Ironically, when people are thrust into a caregiving role, they are unlikely to discover the available resources because they are too busy just keeping their heads above water.”

Although new caregivers need all sorts of things, including more time and money, and more pitching in from other relatives and friends, you presumably can't be responsible for any of that.

What you can do, though, pretty easily, is to provide information about relevant resources.

There is all kinds of help out there that most people know nothing about, because they haven't

needed to know it, and it isn't all very conspicuous. There are sources of information, sources of ideas, and sources of paid help. There are things that can be done to make a home safer or more convenient for invalids to live in, and for caregivers to operate in. There are websites, books, consultants, government agencies, and other resources.

Ironically, when people are thrust into a caregiving role, they are unlikely to discover these resources because they are too busy just trying to keep their heads above water. They don't know where to go quickly for help, and they don't have time for random hunting. Gradually they learn about at least some of their options, but they have suffered unnecessarily in the meantime. And often they never find out at all about some ideas or services that could have helped them.

In our own collection of Retirement Readiness web pages, we have an entire page on different aspects of caregiving, with links to other pages that cover relevant related topics. This is one resource you can use.

There are also others that are helpful, and we list most of the best ones on our own page (which is described a little later on in this *Report*).

Of course, caregivers also need information about *local* resources. Some of the websites talk about local possibilities, and sometimes link to some of them. But in an ideal world, employees needing this kind of help could attend a seminar, read a booklet, or go to a website devoted to resources unique to your geographic area.

If you happen to belong to a local SHRM or ISCEBS chapter, or represent a union, maybe you could propose that such a resource be created and shared among other members. Or maybe some local employee benefits consulting firm could be talked into doing it as a good will gesture to the community.

Not everything should be about making (or saving) money. Helping caregivers helps the caregiver, the person being cared for, the caregiver's employer, and even society as a whole, since the most economical form of care is care at home, provided by a

loved one. The more we make that possible, and easier to manage, the better off everyone is.

Featured Website #1

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers

<http://www.caremanager.org/>

This website is an important resource for employees and others who need to be caregivers, but cannot do it, or who need help doing it.

This most commonly occurs in two situations: (1) the obvious caregiver is still employed, and is not in a position to quit or retire, or perhaps even to manage all the care issues in her or his spare time; and (2) the person needing care lives far away, and the person or persons responsible for seeing that the right care is given are not well positioned either to make the necessary arrangements or to supervise the ongoing quality of care.

As the website explains, a professional Geriatric Care Manager (GCM) is a health and human

services specialist who helps families who are caring for older relatives. The GCM is trained and experienced in any of several fields related to care management, including nursing, gerontology, social work, or psychology.

With this kind of background, and with a knowledge of local care options, a geriatric care manager can provide either a one-time service, such as helping to find an appropriate assisted living, adult foster care, nursing, or hospice facility, or ongoing supervision of the care being provided, or both.

Even when a local family member is available to provide care, the knowledge and experience that a GCM offers can get everything off on the right foot, and can be an ongoing source of advice and support.

The NAPGCM website has a [Find a Care Manager Near You](#) page, where you can ask for a list of professional GCMs within a specified range of where the care will be given. The site also offers advice on what questions you should ask a care manager, and links to recent articles on caregiv-

ing.

Even if you don't expect to provide much advice to employees (or retirees) who find themselves responsible for a relative's care, you can at least refer them to this site.

Featured Website #2

RetirementWorks II: Caregiving

http://www.retirementworks2.com/RetireReady/RW_RetireReady_Love_Caregiving.htm

This web page, part of our own Retirement Readiness collection of web pages, is packed with references to key resources on caregiving.

It's broken down into four main sections:

- Understanding caregiving options
- Caregiving at home
- Assisted living
- Nursing homes and hospices

In each of these sections, you get an annotated list of the best free websites on the subject, covering a variety of topics, along with a separate list of not-for-free items

(mostly books) that can help employees or retirees who need information in greater depth.

For example, the Caregiving At Home section will not only direct you to some excellent general sites dealing with this topic (such as that of the National Family Caregivers Association, and Elder Care Link), but also direct you to places where you can find information about other related topics, such as:

- How to calculate the many tax+on in-home aides that you might hire.
- How to get free criminal background checks on such helpers.
- Where you can learn about hospice at home+options.
- How to be helpful to home-bound people in your neighborhood, or whom you otherwise know, even if you are not the primary caregiver.

Each segment also provides links to other segments on other pages of this collection. For instance, the Caregiving at Home+section links to another page that discusses Aging in Place,+which

connects you to resources that help you understand how to make a home more livable for people who are older or disabled. It also connects to pages that deal with forgiveness and respect, since these become critical virtues to foster in oneself, as a caregiver, more and more so as the caregiving responsibility increases in time and difficulty.

It's all there for free, so check it out, and feel free to refer employees and retirees to it.

About RetirementWORKS[®], Inc.

We are the consumer subsidiary of Still River Retirement Planning Software, Inc., of Harvard, Mass., which has specialized in retirement plans and retirement planning since 1994.

Our philosophy is that retirement needs to be viewed from the retiree's point of view, in all of its complexity. So we offer the most powerful and useful financial software available anywhere for retirees and near-retirees, and advice concerning non-financial aspects of retirement. But we do not sell any financial products or services other than software, and have no financial stake in any advice that is offered.

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