

BRING UP Nebraska

Raising strong, stable kids is a job
for all of us.



Supported by the Nebraska Child Abuse
Prevention Fund Board

FOR BUSINESSES:

At first, the idea of businesses playing a role in raising healthy, stable kids may seem counterintuitive. But when you consider that working adults spend the majority of their waking hours at their place of employment, it becomes clear that employers have a powerful impact on the quality of life of their employees. And employees with healthy, stable homes have fewer sick days and are more productive at work. As a business owner or manager, you have a lot of say in whether your practices positively influence the family lives of your employees.

You can build a culture, policies and practices that encourage the six Protective Factors with your employees' families.

NURTURING AND ATTACHMENT

Parents that are securely bonded to their kids are far more likely to have the positive interactions that promote thriving children. Business owners and managers like you can promote nurturing and attachment through:

Maternity leave – While companies with 50 or more employees are required to offer 12 weeks of unpaid leave to mothers after the birth of a child, smaller businesses may find this difficult. Work with your expecting employees to make sure they get enough time to bond with their babies, either with 8-12 weeks of maternity leave or with a shorter amount of leave followed by a part-time return period. For employees reluctant to take unpaid leave, consider offering inexpensive short-term disability insurance that will pay a percentage of the employee's salary while she's on leave.

Bonding leave – Dads need time to bond with their new children too. Many businesses give new fathers a paid week off to get to know a new baby in addition to any vacation or sick time. This is a great way for dads to get to know the newest member of their families.

Encourage vacation and sick leave – Having vacation and sick time is wonderful, but employees often don't use all of the time their employers provide them. By creating "use it or lose it" policies that allow employees to roll over only a week of their vacation/sick time, you're encouraging them to use these days off to care for ill family members or connect as a family with a vacation.

Family events – Having an annual holiday party or family picnic can be a good way for employees to connect their home life with their work life. By providing family-friendly activities that your employees can do with their children, you're helping them build a deeper connection, while letting your employees know that they're important to you.

KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING/CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Parents that understand the ages and stages of infancy, childhood, and youth make better parenting decisions. Businesses can help provide some of this knowledge.

Books as gifts – If you give gifts to your employees on birthdays, holidays or when a new child is born, consider giving a book about child development. *Mind in The Making* and *The Happiest Baby on the Block* are two good choices.

Home visiting referrals – Many new parents find the services of a home visitor invaluable. A trained child development professional will visit the home, check on the child's development and share activities parents can do to help the child meet developmental milestones. Provide new parents that work for you with the contact information for home visiting in your area, such as:

- [The Early Development Network](#)
- [Sixpence Early Learning](#)
- Early Head Start
- [Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting](#)

Mobile apps – [Staying on Track](#) is a free mobile app available through iTunes. It provides guidelines for children from birth through age 3.

PARENTAL RESILIENCE

One key component to a successful family and employee is skills to manage challenges and crises. As a business owner or manager, you know that the job can be a primary source of stress...and that may not change. One thing you can do is provide employees resources to deal effectively with stress.

Encourage regular breaks and renewals – Periodically recharging while on the job leads to greater productivity and innovation, plus allows employees to effectively deal with stress.

Reward healthy living – Regular exercise is a proven way to manage stress and promote resilience. Provide your employees an incentive to join and use a local gym. For example, any employee who logs 21 days of workouts in a month earns a day off. You can also work with local health clubs to negotiate a lower rate for your employees.

Personal development – Many companies will periodically bring in trainers to speak to employees about health and stress management.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

This Protective Factor is a win-win. Employees are far more likely to stay with an employer if they feel like they have friends on the job. For your employees, parents who have solid friendships are much more likely to have positive, healthy interactions with their children. Is your workplace a place where friendships grow?

Informal mentoring programs – These effective and free programs help new employees become acclimated with your business, while providing them with an instant connection. Mentors can help guide employees without involving time management and make employees feel like they belong.

Social events – The occasional social event on a Friday afternoon can do wonders for relationship building. It brings people closer together and helps employees create those workplace friendships that mean so much for their on-the-job performance and their ability to manage stress at home.

CONCRETE SUPPORTS

Every family needs concrete supports like health services and many families need concrete supports like child care. While it might not be the role of your business to provide these services, supervisors and human resource managers are in a good position to provide referrals and indirect access to concrete supports.

Have an EAP – An Employee Assistance Program is an inexpensive benefit businesses can offer their employees, allowing them to get counseling for personal matters, family or work issues, substance abuse help and other supports for free.

Opt for insurance that covers mental health visits

If you offer health insurance to your employees, be sure to offer a policy that covers counseling and mental health prescriptions.

Keep a list – Physicians, dentists, child care facilities, grief counseling groups, food pantries—sometimes when an employee has an emergency need, coworkers and supervisors are the first to notice. Being able to provide the contact information for a service will benefit the employee, their family and you.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN

One effective way for businesses to support the social and emotional development of their employees' children is to promote access to high-quality child care.

Dependent Care Flex Plan – Allow your employees to pay for child care tax free by instituting a flex plan. A certain portion of their wages is withheld and not taxed, and they can be reimbursed from the withheld money for what they spend on child care.

Consider a partnership – If there is a high-quality child care facility near your location, consider approaching them about reduced rates for your employees. The benefit to you is that having your employees' children at a nearby child care center also makes it easier for them to stay with you.