The Washentaw County Work/Life Consortium is working with local businesses to provide free information, resources and contacts to small and medium employers on work life programs. The overall goal was an effort to improve recruitment and retention capabilities for area employers by helping them integrate work/life options into their companies. First they determined what the current practices were in the business community. Second differentiating between the availability of work/life options or work/life benefits and workforce development. Third by making the business case of the benefits for both employee and employer. Fourth identify available resources. These resources were then made available to local businesses through the work life consortium. The call focuses on three examples of the type of work the consortium was able to assist in implementing. Entyre Doc Prep a small high tech employer with about 36 employees. The consortium helped the company look at child care issues by surveying employees on what their needs were. The survey determined that employees needed emergency back up child care. So the company used resource and referral to identify alternative child care arrangements. The company recently built a new building and put in an exercise facility and then looked at external resources that could be used to help employees. The company applied for grants through the state to provide on-site health promotion programs. The second business that worked with the work/life consortium was Phillips Display Components that has its corporate headquarters located in Ann Arbor. Angie from the work/life consortium worked with the organization to determine the types of programs that could be offered to make life easier for employees. One of the most successful programs was a brown bag lunch series. These series are held monthly for about 45 minutes where a variety of topics are discussed from child care, stress, taxes, gardening etc. It was just one of the successful programs that came out of the partnership with the work/life consortium. The final business highlighted in this call was Medstat a health care information management company with approximately 700 employees. The consortium informed the organization of tools it could use to help employees balance work and family. Some of the things that came out of the work was a flex time policy, brought speakers on-site to help employees with financial planning, good
nutrition and many other topics. The organization was very deliberate in starting small, getting a program up and running and then demonstrating success. This is a great strategy to gain upper management buy in.

**KEY POINTS**

- Work/Life consortiums or professional groups are a valuable resource when starting work life programs or new initiatives.
- Employee needs assessments are critical in establishing a focus for employers.
- Programs need to reflect company cultures and internal issues.
- Starting small with low cost or no cost initiatives is a good way to build work/life initiatives and gain manager buy in.
- Using demographics and trends can highlight the importance of exploring and implementing work life programs to upper management.

**ADVANTAGES/SUCCESES**

- Networking is a valuable resource and support for any employer for exploring work/life programs.
- Asking employees what their needs are, identifying common themes and then taking action raises morale, increases retention and can have positive impact on productivity and strengthen the bottom line.
- Brown bag lunch seminars have high impact, low cost and are a great way to raise visibility of work life issues that employees are facing.
- Upper management buy in increases the success of new programs and mid level manager buy in increases utilization in the program.

**DISADVANTAGES/ROAD BLOCKS**

- Lack of support from management can lead to low employee utilization.
- Finding funding for services can be a challenge.
- Heavy workload of the HR department can make it difficult to focus on new initiatives.
- Business climate can adversely impact the addition of new programs.
- Low utilization of programs will negatively effect addition of any new programs.

**SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION**

Angie Laycock  
Title: Coordinator  
Agency: Washtenaw Work/Life Consortium  
E-mail: angiel@onebox.com
RESOURCES

- Karen Furia, Women's Bureau Regional Director, Region 10 furia-karen@dol.gov
- The Women's Bureau http://www.dol.gov/wb/
- Kelly Tyler, Child Care Resources, Business Liaison tyler@childcare.org
- Child Care Resources King County Washington www.childcare.org
- Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral www.childcarenet.org
- Child Care in Health Care http://www.childcareinhealthcare.org/
- The Child Care Bureau http://nccic.org
- Alliance of Work Life Professionals http://www.awlp.org
- The Fatherhood Project http://www.fatherhoodproject.org
- Life Work Strategies http://www.nationalpartnership.org
- National Partnership for Women & Families http://www.nationalpartnership.org
- Boston College Center for Work & Family http://www.bc.edu/cwf
- Labor Project for Working Families http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~iir/workfam/home.html
- Blue Suit Mom http://www.bluesuitmom.com/
- National Network for Child Care http://www.nncc.org/
- Gil Gordon' Site on Telecommuting http://www.gilgordon.com
- The Green Commute http://www.cleanair.org
- Child Care Partnership Project http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships
- Woman's-Work http://www.womens-work.com
- Human Resources Executive/Cornell http://www.workindex.com
- Families and Work Institute http://www.familiesandwork.org
- The Life Station http://www.thelifestation.com
- Work Life Benefits http://www.wlb.com

The Women's Bureau Region X office and Child Care Resources of King County has compiled this "Work and Family Virtual Conference Call Summary Sheets" for information sharing and does not endorse any programs or organizations included in it. These summaries include information on programs and policies that employers have tried or ideas and thoughts that work and work/life professionals have shared.