

## STARTING WORK/LIFE PROGRAMS: EMPLOYERS FIRST STEPS

JUNE, 2001 WOMEN'S BUREAU CONFERENCE CALL

**Hosts:** Nancy Chen, Women's Bureau Regional Director, Region 5

Angie Laycock, Washtenaw Work/Life Consortium

**Speakers:** Nancy Burkhalter, Vice President, Entyre Doc Prep

Pamela Allen, Facilities Manager, Phillips Display

Frank Zyber, Human Resources Manager, MedStat Group

### SUMMARY OF TOPIC

The Washtenaw 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/SUCSESSES**

- 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**

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## RESOURCES

- Karen Furia, Women's Bureau Regional Director, Region 10 [furia-karen@dol.gov](mailto:furia-karen@dol.gov)
- The Women's Bureau <http://www.dol.gov/wb/>
- Kelly Tyler, Child Care Resources, Business Liaison [tyler@childcare.org](mailto:tyler@childcare.org)
- Child Care Resources King County Washington [www.childcare.org](http://www.childcare.org)
- Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral [www.childcarenet.org](http://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.womans-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.*