

The Time is Now

TOOLKIT TO BUILD BETTER WORKPLACES FOR WORKING MOMS AND ALL CAREGIVERS

This is our story. Amidst the tumultuous and generation-defining year of 2020, a working mom founded the Mother's Monday movement. Gayatri Agnew dreamt of bringing attention to the increased pressure placed on the shoulders of working mothers by cultivating a community of leaders working together to reinvent the intersection of caregiving and ambition, and her dream has sparked a nationwide movement.

Today, the Mother's Monday movement is focused on challenging stereotypes, sparking conversations, shifting workplace culture and policies, and creating a better world for caregivers in the workforce. The movement is now stewarded by [Path Forward](#), a national non-profit organization whose vision is a world where caregiving is recognized and valued, does not disproportionately hinder women's career progression or economic opportunity, and where everyone can achieve their personal and professional dreams.

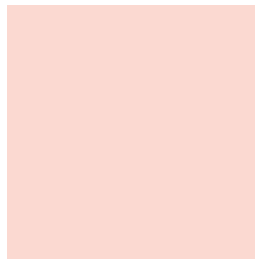




THE WHAT

In order to help fuel the movement toward more equitable and supportive company cultures for working mothers, we've created this toolkit. It's a comprehensive—but not exhaustive—list of ways you can actively work toward creating change for working mothers and their families. And remember that improving benefits for women benefits all genders*, just as improving benefits for parents improves them for everybody. Together, we can reinvent the future for all caregivers in the workforce.

This toolkit is a grab bag. Not every benefit makes sense for every company or all employees within a company. Hourly and salaried workers have different needs, needs vary by the times of day employees work, and what rural workers need varies from what suburban and urban workers need, not to mention remote workers spread out across the country, or even the world! The point is, it's complicated. Your company's journey to better benefits for working moms and other caregivers begins not with this toolkit alone, but by assessing the realities and needs of your employees, and picking the ideas that make the most sense for your organization.



Pay particular attention to the needs of women of color, and on amplifying their voices. Every disadvantage white women face is amplified for women of color. **58% of Black moms** feel they don't have a voice in the workplace and shouldn't speak up.



**"Woman" includes anyone who identifies as a woman. We acknowledge that gender expansive and non-binary folks experience similar disadvantages as those who identify as a woman.*



THE WHY

- **Better benefits will allow your company to tap into a massive talent pool:** [1.5 million women have vanished from the labor force since February 2020](#), and due to the ongoing shortage of spots in child care centers, unemployment statistics don't fully account for this loss.
- **You'll improve employee retention:** [83% of women and 81% of men with children age 0-5](#) said that child care benefits would be a very important factor in deciding whether to stay at their current employer or switch employers. [Employee loss costs companies up to a third of the employee's annual salary](#).
- **Workplace morale will rise:** Choosing to build better policies and better work-life balance among your employees is not just the right thing to do, it's the right business move. [Productivity and satisfaction rise](#) significantly when employees have flexibility, trust, and tangible support to live meaningful, healthy lives outside of work.
- **Don't be complicit in the gender gap; solve it:** According to the [UN](#), "At the current rate, it will take 257 years to close the global gender pay gap." Intentional, bold action is needed. One of the lead causes of the gender gap is the motherhood penalty, an observed effect that [becoming a mother takes a toll on a woman's earnings and economic security](#). Better workplace benefits for working mothers is one of the most powerful actions a company can take to close the gender gap.





THE HOW

Every benefit included in this toolkit is high-payoff, but we've ranked them for you by ease of implementation. Choose as many as make sense for your business.

LOWER EFFORT

- **Provide flexibility and trust:** The way that employees view company culture is heavily influenced by the amount of flexibility you offer. Only [47% of employees with no flexibility report a positive outlook on company culture](#), while [83%](#) with some flexibility do. Give your employees the greatest possible control over their schedule and workplace location. This could mean allowing hybrid and remote work whenever possible, approving a four day work week for some or all employees, and for shift workers, scheduling shifts far in advance and at routine, more predictable times. If hours fall outside traditional hours, be aware that parents may not be able to find care for their children. Note what time local schools let out, and consider if aftercare/after-school programs are available.
- **Time your events:** Whenever possible, hold company gatherings between the hours of school drop off and pickup. If you're holding an event in the evening, provide on-site childcare and wrap up before bedtime, or offer attendees a stipend to cover a babysitter at home. Without accommodation, many working parents won't be able to participate, missing out on valuable conversations and relationship building that will ultimately lead to decreased potential for promotion.
- **Redefine sick time and PTO:** Sick days should be allowed to be used not just for the employee, but to care for sick household members as well—a basic benefit only [1 in 4 Americans](#) have access to. If your company offers unlimited PTO, avoid common pitfalls, like enforcing PTO [minimums](#).
- **Provide breastfeeding support:** Ensure your policies and physical spaces support breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is globally recommended for at least [6 months](#), and many employers and managers don't have realistic expectations of [what this support can mean](#) for women returning from maternity leave.
- **Make leave gender inclusive:** That's right, it's time to stop saying maternity leave, paternity leave, and adoption leave in favor of the all-inclusive parental leave, which should be evenly distributed regardless of gender. Mothers will continue to be disadvantaged in the workplace unless fathers are encouraged to take every single day of their provided leave, and early return from leave is discouraged, especially at the highest levels of [leadership](#).

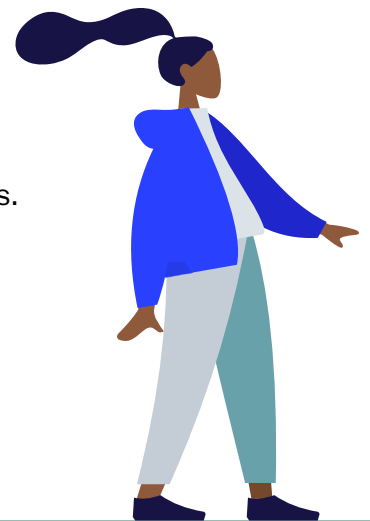




- **Offer tax-free spending accounts:** Implement a flexible spending or dependent care assistance program, effectively giving employees a discount on their tuition payments. Over 80% of American families pay over the recommended 7% of their income cap for child care. Your company can help take some of that sting out of payments.
- **Welcome children:** On an emergency basis, a working mom may exhaust all of her options and have no choice but to bring her child into the workplace or onto Zoom calls. As long as safety allows, this should be welcomed and not penalized.
- **Join advocacy efforts:** Involve your company in local, state, and federal advocacy efforts. Employers are a powerful voice in policy, and your employees look to you not just for benefits, but for thought leadership as well. This toolkit is full of many benefits that no one business can implement on their own. While in other developed nations, the financial burden of employee benefits falls largely on governments, today in the US it's up to companies to step up and fill the gap, so it's important to advocate for better policies at federal and state levels. This will also show your employees that you're attentive to their needs.

MEDIUM EFFORT

- **Pursue wage equity:** Audit your employees' wages and ensure that there's not only gender equity in wages, but adequate, thriving wages among all staff. Ensure raises are exceeding inflation, and that when the company profits, profit is passed on to employees, not just shareholders.
- **Reevaluate sick time and PTO:** Research or survey families on how many weekdays local child care centers, schools, and summer camps don't cover. Then compare this to your company calendar and how much paid time off you provide. The gap may be as many as 60 weekdays, without even accounting for illnesses. The average number of sick days daycare children have every year was [12.5](#), and that was before the pandemic brought stricter quarantine requirements for COVID-like symptoms. Allot PTO and sick time in sufficient amounts to cover not just personal needs, but family needs.





- **Support transitions:** Provide on-ramps back to work after leave or a career break. This might include making some job listings part time or offering ramp-up to full time after leave, implementing a formal mentorship program, leveraging your ERGs to support parents transitioning back from leave, or implementing a [returnship program](#) for people returning to the paid workforce after career breaks.
- **Build an ERG for caregivers:** [Create an employee resource](#) or affinity group to allow working parents and other caregivers to gather and advocate for their needs. Ensure your ERG isn't subject to common inequitable pitfalls, such as lack of funding or [compensation for leaders](#), including taking their contributions into account when considering promotions, and ensure that [leadership is invested in listening](#) to ERG recommendations.
- **Consider new childcare benefits:**
 - > **Access to emergency/backup care:** Whether it's a childcare closure due to contagion or a snow day, [only 8% of parents with children 5](#) and under have access to emergency or backup childcare from their employer. The reality is that schools close more readily than workplaces, and parents are on the hook for a full day of care and entertainment. By giving them access to emergency care, companies enable working parents to stay productive.
 - > **Subsidized backup care:** Beyond just offering backup care, employers can help make it a more affordable option by subsidizing it. And the return on investment can be significant: a business of 250 employees loses [\\$75,000 a year](#) in work time costs when employees, necessarily, care for sick children.
 - > **Reserved access: Local childcare facilities** offer partnerships to employers to hold or guarantee a number of spots for their employees. You may give someone a job offer, but without child care, a stellar candidate may have to decline.
 - > **Childcare search assistance:** Whether partnering with an outside service or offering an individual childcare concierge, the difficult task of finding and vetting caregivers can be stressful and difficult to navigate. Businesses are eligible to receive a [tax credit of 10% of their expenses up to \\$150,000](#) for providing these services, under the Employer-Provided Child Care Facilities and Services Credit.





HIGHER EFFORT

- **Offer on-site childcare:** While a handful of forward-thinking companies have been offering on-site childcare for their employees for years (think [Patagonia](#) and [IBM](#)), many more companies have recently started to follow suit (see: [Walmart](#), [Hormel](#), and even this smaller [ski resort](#)). An on-site childcare is a significant investment, but one that will reap massive rewards: a [high rate of mothers](#) return from parental leave when they have access to this benefit.
- **Subsidize childcare expenses:** Whether you offer on-site care or not, childcare is expensive. Many companies offer subsidies or vouchers for childcare costs, if not direct payments. Ideally, this benefit could flex to include nannies, relatives, or smaller, at-home centers. This benefit can [lower absenteeism by 30%, reduce turnover by 60%](#), increase recruitment, and boost productivity. Companies like [Dropbox](#) have found a way to make these payments equitable to employees who don't have caregiving needs as well by providing what they call "wellness perks" to all employees.
- **Offer paid family leave:** [Paid parental leave](#) increases labor force participation and lowers turnover rates among new parents, benefiting businesses through lower turnover, lower recruitment and training costs, and retaining higher productivity, experienced employees. Paid leave increased the rate of mothers returned to work with their pre-birth employer [by 13%](#).
- **Offer Ramp Down/Ramp Up benefits:** Add paid ramp down and/or ramp up benefits into parental leave policies. Ramp Down/Ramp Up refers to working at a part-time capacity without a loss of pay or benefits, on either end of parental or medical leave. Many [law firms offer this policy](#), and it's time for other industries to follow suit.

CONTACT US

For more information, to share your company's story, or to get involved in the movement to reinvent the relationship between motherhood and work, email us at info@mothersmonday.com, and visit Mother's Monday on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), or at mothersmonday.com. Mother's Monday holds an annual gathering the day after Mother's Day, both highlighting companies doing this important work, and spotlighting trends in the workplace. *We'd love to connect with you!*

