



Caring for Aging Parents Affects Worker Absenteeism and Productivity

By: Janice K. Roberts, Founder, Alliance Home Health Care

Of the 44 million people who care for aging parents or elderly relatives, 60 percent of them work full- or part-time. The stresses and demands on these working caregivers are overwhelming. They are often late to work, early to leave and distracted throughout the workday. Torn between family obligations and duties at work, there is rarely a balance for these over-taxed caregivers. According to a study by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, 11 percent of these workers will take a leave of absence and 10 percent ultimately will quit their jobs.

For the company's bottom line, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the impact is substantial:

- American businesses lose an average of 2.8 million work days each year due to unplanned absences;
- Those absences cost employers nearly \$74 billion;
- Work day interruptions due to care giving of adults cost employers around \$3 billion;
- Absenteeism due to care giving costs employers nearly \$5 million.

And the challenges will not be dissipating. By 2020, one in three U.S. households is expected to be involved in caring for elderly or disabled relatives, up from one in four today.

I challenge employers to explore elder care benefits that can not only reduce these losses but boost employee loyalty, morale and retention. Of course, in a time when businesses are struggling with health care benefits, elder care benefits may be the furthest thing from the minds of company leaders. However, there are a number of resources that can be offered with minimal impact to the employer yet substantial, long-term impact to the employee.

Those resources include:

- Support groups held onsite for caregivers
- Expanded employee assistance programs
- Referrals to organizations that provide assistance to caregivers and their families
- Educational/informational programs held onsite for those caring for their loved ones
- Increased flextime, or the addition of telecommuting and job-sharing
- Programs to provide respite care and adult day services
- Employee and/or employer funded long-term care insurance options.

Employers in Central Indiana are fortunate in that there are numerous elder care providers and support groups that can equip their employees with information and solutions. Some employers are choosing to provide access to elder care managers as an employee benefit – experienced, objective and health care trained professional advisors who can assess an elder's home-living, physical, emotional and financial needs (as well as the caregiver's needs) and provide recommendations for the best possible solutions for the senior's health and safety.

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While establishing support systems for employees responsible for care giving may help alleviate some of today's absenteeism and productivity problems, it is also a strategic and prudent step toward ensuring the future of Indiana's companies. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2015, one out of every five Indiana residents will be over the age of 60. As more employees are faced with care giving duties for their loved ones, it's in the best interest of employers to do what they can to help make these workers the most efficient and productive they can be – both at work and at home.

About Janice K. Roberts

Jan is a life-long entrepreneur dedicated to developing solutions that meet the needs of Indiana's seniors and their caregivers. As founder and administrator of Alliance Home Health Care and Alliance Care Advisors, Jan is responsible for the organizations' day-to-day operations, service and program development, and establishing and maintaining relationships in the home health care, geriatric care management, hospice, assisted living and long-term care communities. Alliance offers a full continuum of home health care services including total coordination of medical and personal home care needs; this includes geriatric advocacy, nursing, non-medical home care, education, social work, and physical, occupational and speech therapies.

About Alliance Home Health Care

Alliance Home Health Care, established in Indianapolis in 1991, is one of the most experienced licensed and certified home care and elder care providers for senior adults offering geriatric care management; home care nursing; home-based occupational, speech and physical therapy; social work and non-medical personal home care and senior companion services on an hourly, 24-hour, private duty, full-time, part-time or intermittent basis. The company provides services, personnel and resources that enable individuals to remain in the safety and comfort of their own homes for as long as possible. Alliance is one of the only Indianapolis-area senior citizen health care service providers to offer customized, one-to-one training and educational programs for diseases such as Alzheimer's or dementia.

Alliance also serves clients living in senior living communities or transitioning back to home from assisted living settings, hospitals, nursing homes or rehabilitation facilities. The company serves the following Indiana cities and towns: Indianapolis, Carmel, Fishers, Castleton, Geist, Noblesville, Westfield, Zionsville, Greenwood, Brownsburg, Danville and Avon. For more information call (317) 581-1100 or visit <http://www.alliancehomehealthcare.net/>.