



The Employer's Guide to Supporting the Working Caregiver

A Toolkit for Colorado Workplaces

June 2026

Why Employers Should Support Caregivers

Supporting caregiving employees is a win-win: it helps organizations attract and retain top talent, boost loyalty, and lower costs. Employees who receive caregiving support are 30% more likely to stay with employers.^[5] **A survey revealed that 76% of respondents agreed that supporting caregivers in the workplace helps reduce employee healthcare costs.**^[6] This toolkit offers practical strategies and resources to help your staff balance work with their caregiving roles, ultimately protecting both your workforce's well-being and your organization's bottom line.

The Value of Your Caregiving Employees

While caregiving employees are juggling big responsibilities that can disrupt work, it is critical to recognize their value. A women's survey in 2023 revealed that half of respondents report that their caregiving experience makes them more empathetic in the workplace, nearly 40% developed greater efficiency, and 30% improved their prioritization skills.^[4] Caregiving employees develop high-value, unique skills such as advanced crisis management, project prioritization, complex systemic navigation, and high empathy which translate into exceptional workplace leadership.



The Cost of Caregiving at Work

Adopting caregiver-friendly workplace policies is a vital business strategy that protects organizational success. Caregiving duties significantly disrupt workforce metrics, directly impacting an organization's bottom line through reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and catastrophic turnover costs. Structuring an infrastructure for care is an economic necessity to protect your most valuable asset: your people.

These workplace disruptions are not a reflection of employee performance, but rather a structural symptom of rigid scheduling frameworks. When employers introduce smart, flexible practices, the baseline productivity loss is heavily mitigated, allowing companies to retain highly experienced talent.

Who are the Working Caregivers in Colorado?

Caregivers are individuals who provide support for a family member or a friend with a disability or health challenge. They may live with the person they are caring for, or may even be providing support long-distance. Caregiving situations are diverse; for instance, a caregiver may be a parent caring for a child with a disability, an adult child caring for an older adult family member, a spouse caring for their partner with a chronic illness, a grandparent caring for their grandchildren, or a caregiver who has multiple caregiving roles. **Roughly 22% of adults in Colorado are stepping up to care for their loved ones.**^[2]

Critically, this isn't just a domestic issue; it's a workplace issue. A staggering 70% of Colorado's caregivers are also juggling full- or part-time jobs.^[2] The average number of hours of care per week varies anywhere from a handful to a second full-time job—collectively contributing \$16 billion in unpaid labor each year in Colorado.^[7]

Without workplace understanding and flexibility, many of these vital employees are ultimately forced to reduce their hours or leave the workforce entirely, resulting in high turnover costs for employers.

***"There are only four kinds of people in the world:
Those who have been caregivers,
Those who are currently caregivers,
Those who will be caregivers,
And those who need caregivers."***

ROSALYNN CARTER

THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED
910,000
CAREGIVERS 18+ STATEWIDE



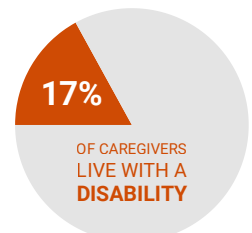
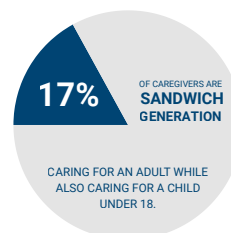
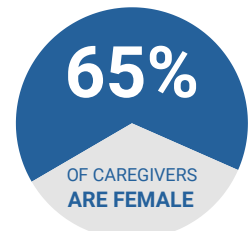
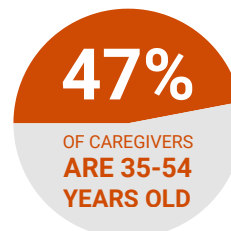
650 MILLION
HOURS
OF CARE PROVIDED
ANNUALLY (APPOX.)



HOURLY VALUE OF CARE IS
\$24.39
OR \$16 BILLION ANNUALLY

[7]

AVERAGE CAREGIVER AGE **50** YEARS



[5]

How Does Caregiving Impact Your Workplace?

Adopting caregiver-friendly workplace policies is no longer just an ethical choice—it is a vital business strategy that protects both staff well-being and organizational success.

A disconnect exists between how employees experience caregiving and how business leaders perceive its impact. According to research in 2019:

- **Employee Reality:** 82% of caregivers acknowledge that their responsibilities affect their ability to perform their best at work at least some of the time.
- **Leadership Misconception:** In contrast, 38% of business leaders believe caregiving has no impact on performance at all, and another 38% are uncertain about its effects.

This gap in leadership awareness masks potentially severe, daily operational strains that can negatively impact businesses. Because caregivers may not find the structural support they need at work, the pressure manifests in three major ways.



- **Workday Disruptions & Absenteeism:** Over half of caregiving employees report needing to arrive late, leave early, or take unexpected time off to manage a loved one's needs. When caregiving demands intensify, it triggers a crisis in care that leads to massive chunks of lost time; on average, women in these intense roles miss 33 days of work per year, while men miss 12 days.^[8]
- **Hidden Labor Adjustments:** To cope with the lack of workplace flexibility, many caregivers quietly downshift their careers. They resort to turning down promotions, reducing their hours from full-time to part-time, or opting for early retirement.
- **Turnover and Replacement:** When these adjustments are no longer enough, employees quit entirely. U.S. businesses lose approximately \$1 trillion annually due to voluntary turnover. Replacing a single employee is a massive financial blow, costing anywhere from one-half to two times their annual salary when accounting for recruiting, training, and lost productivity.^[9]

A Strategic Framework for Success

These economic impacts do not mean caregivers are poor performers; they are highly skilled, dedicated employees navigating unpredictable demands. By building a supportive environment, organizations provide the vital scaffolding these professionals need to perform at their absolute best.

How to Get Started

Becoming caregiving-friendly does not mean finding an immediate solution for every unique scenario. Workplace cultures vary based on resources, size, and operational models, meaning there is no single "one-size-fits-all" approach. The true first step is a commitment to building a culture of awareness by evaluating your current foundation, identifying hidden barriers, and auditing your existing benefits.

Step 1: Evaluate Your Current Resources and How They Are Being Used

Begin by mapping out the workplace policies and practices already available to your workforce that can be optimized to offer stronger support:

- Existing Paid Leave: Check if your standard sick days, vacation, or personal time can explicitly be used for a relative's care, rather than just the employee's own illness.
- Federal Protections: Ensure your HR team provides clear guidance on how to apply for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Nationally, FMLA allows workers at companies with 50 or more employees to take 12 weeks of unpaid leave. However, because it is unpaid, about 90% of employees back off once they realize they cannot afford to lose their paycheck, which is where Colorado's FAMLI Program comes into play.

56% of working caregivers in Colorado go in late, leave early, or take time off.

17% of working caregivers in Colorado went from working full-time to part-time or reduced their hours.

11% of working Colorado caregivers gave up working entirely.



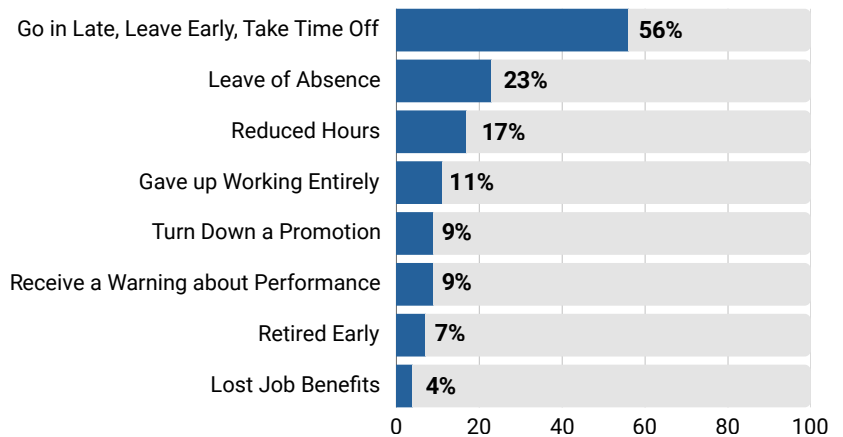
“As the population ages, as more single mothers care for their children, and in a very tight labor market, employers need to wake up: Supporting the caregiving needs of their employees isn’t only a nice perk, it may be critical to maintaining a productive workplace in the 21st Century.”

HOWARD GLECKMAN, FORBES



- **Colorado’s FAMLI Program:** The [Family and Medical Leave Insurance](#) (FAMLI) program serves as a state-run social insurance system. Funded by small premiums split between employers and employees, FAMLI removes the barrier of unpaid leave by providing Colorado workers with up to 12 weeks of partial wage replacement. This system ensures that employees can step away to care for a family member with a serious health condition without losing financial stability. Determine how your corporate programs can sit on top of these state-mandated benefits to fully support your staff.
- **Operational Flexibility:** Review whether compressed work weeks, predictable shift-swapping, or remote-work options can be cross-utilized to accommodate emergency care routines.

Colorado Family Caregivers Experience Work Disruptions



1

DEFINE YOUR
CURRENT RESOURCES

2

DETERMINE YOUR
EMPLOYEE NEEDS

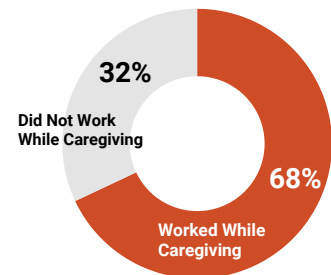
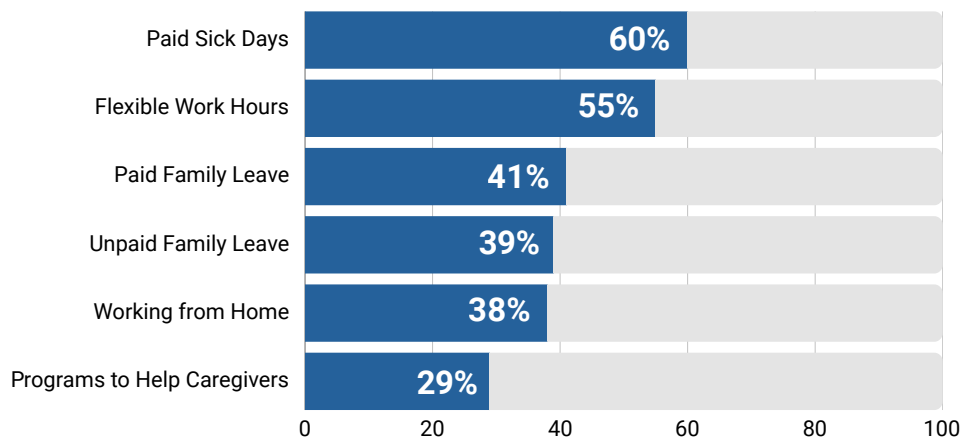
3

FORM A COMMITTEE

4

DETERMINE NEXT
STEPS

Workplace Benefits Offered to Colorado Caregivers



29% of working caregivers have not told their supervisors they are caregiving

Investigate Employee Awareness and Usage of Existing Supports

Once you list your existing programs, ask a critical question: *How many of our employees actually know these benefits exist?* National benchmarking data reveals a severe communication breakdown: more than half of benefits managers admit that their employees are “not very” or “not at all” aware of the caregiving benefits their organization offers.^[10] Furthermore, information is rarely integrated, as only 50% of employers communicate caregiving resources alongside traditional medical and health benefits on their corporate portals.^[10]

Compounding this problem is the self-identification gap. Most staff members do not recognize themselves under the clinical title of “family caregiver”—they simply view themselves as daughters, sons, or spouses helping their family. Shifting your HR language to explicitly name these everyday responsibilities is vital to driving benefit utilization.



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Step 2: Determine Employee Needs

To bridge the disconnect between employee needs and leadership assumptions, organizations should actively survey their workforce. Because caregivers may fear that disclosing their domestic burdens will cause managers to view them as less committed or pass them over for promotion, these questionnaires should include an anonymous option.

When designing your care survey, keep the following strategic frameworks in mind:

- **Engage Every Level:** Ensure your outreach spans all departments, shifts, and levels of employment. The daily operational realities and scheduling flexibility available to a salaried executive are vastly different from those of an hourly or part-time worker.
- **Look Beyond the Label:** Simply asking, “Are you a caregiver?” will cause your data to fall short. Because of the self-identification gap, employees rarely use this clinical title. Instead, frame questions around actual behaviors, such as supporting an aging parent, a partner with a chronic illness, or a child with a disability.



- **Cultivate Cultural and Structural Sensitivity:** Be mindful of how caregiving dynamics vary across families, languages, and cultures. This baseline empathy should be baked into your survey design to ensure all employees feel safe sharing their realities. You may be able to achieve this by running the survey by a select group of employees for their feedback; clearly explain the purpose of the survey; ensure that survey responses are anonymous and confidential; and asking open-ended questions or offering “other” as a survey response option.
- **Follow a Continuous Improvement Cycle:** A truly caregiver-friendly organization relies on a four-stage assessment loop: conduct a care census to map caregiver proportions and demographics; survey employees on which current benefits they find valuable; introduce targeted benefits to address newly uncovered, unmet needs; and continuously assess the operational impact of those changes.

It is rarely feasible to tackle every operational need at once, and that is entirely okay. If your survey results show a massive concentration of responses focused on a specific pain point—such as a lack of quiet spaces for medical phone calls, or a widespread demand for resource information on dementia—treat that as your green light. Targeting one highly requested area gives your organization a clear, high-impact starting point to build momentum.

Sample Questions to Help Determine the Impact of Caregiving in Your Workplace

Identifying Caregivers:

- Do you provide care to another person (family member, friend, neighbor, etc.) who has a disability or special health care need? (Clarify that care includes personal care, medical tasks, and supporting activities of daily living).

Comfort & Workplace Culture:

- Do you feel comfortable talking about your caregiving role at work? If not, why?
- Is there a quiet, private space available in the office to make personal care coordination phone calls?
- Do you feel supported in stepping away from work to make private calls related to care for your loved ones?

Workplace Friction Points:

- How many times in the last month have you had to adjust your work hours (leave early, come in late, request unexpected time off) to care for an individual with health care challenges?
- Have you ever passed on a promotion or reduced your work hours due to your caregiving responsibilities?
- On a scale of 1 - 5 (1 - very poor, 5 = excellent), how well do you balance your work and personal life?

Benefit Awareness & Utilization:

- Which organizational policies and benefits have you accessed in the past (e.g., Paid Leave, FMLA, Colorado FAMLI, parental leave, or paid sick days)?
- If you need information about a caregiving benefit or resource, do you know exactly where to go for assistance?
- How well is this information shared across the organization?

Future Supports:

- What is your satisfaction level with the amount of paid leave and support currently offered?
- What resources would make the biggest positive difference in your role as a working caregiver (e.g., flexible hours, remote work options, lunch-and-learns, respite options, emotional/mental health support, or resource fairs)?
- Would you be interested in joining an employee family caregiving support group?

Step 3: Moving from Assessment to Action: Building Your Care Team

Making your workplace more family- and caregiving-friendly takes time and should be a collaborative, iterative process. If you already have a committee that works on workplace culture, health and safety, or wellness, consider expanding its scope to include caregiving initiatives. Alternatively, you can form a dedicated caregiving subcommittee or launch a formal **Employee Resource Group (ERG)**. [This article](#)^[11] from AARP can help you get started.

Assemble Champions Across All Organizational Levels

A successful care committee requires diverse representation across your entire business structure. Employees do not need a corporate title to lead or participate; find organic caregiving champions across your organization and empower them.

- **Front-Line Workers & Varying Roles:** Ensure representatives from hourly, part-time, and shift-based positions are at the table, as their logistical barriers differ significantly from those of salaried or remote office staff.
- **Active Caregivers:** Involving employees who are actively managing a personal caregiving role provides indispensable, lived-experience insights into what resources are actually valuable.



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Equipping supervisors with the practical tools to handle scheduling disruptions sensitively ensures that company values translate directly into daily operations.

Secure Visible Leadership Support

Including management is essential to demonstrate top-down organizational alignment. Building a concrete business case—proving that caregiver support increases productivity and decreases absenteeism—is necessary to secure executive backing.

To overcome executive hesitation regarding the “soft ROI” of care benefits, tie your goals directly to corporate performance metrics: talent recruitment, workforce retention, and reduced corporate healthcare expenses. For instance, the millennial workforce (who now represent a full 25% of all family caregivers) actively expects operational flexibility and hybrid infrastructure as standard components of compensation. It is far more cost-effective to implement flexible care scaffolding than to lose a competitive edge in recruiting modern top-tier talent. Senior executives need to be open about their own family caregiving journeys; when leadership models vulnerability, it dispels workplace stigma and encourages employees to utilize available resources without fear of professional penalization.

Equip Your Managers with Targeted Training

While HR establishes broad leave policies, front-line managers handle day-to-day work-life harmonization. If a supervisor penalizes an employee for requesting flexibility, or measures dedication strictly by physical “face time,” your programs will fail. To ensure organizational consistency across business units, provide managers with specialized on-demand orientations. Equipping supervisors with the practical tools to handle scheduling disruptions sensitively ensures that company values translate directly into daily operations.

Define Strategic Benchmarks

Before executing your care committee's roadmap, align your committee on a structured framework to map out your long-term evolution:

- **Deploy a Staged Framework:** Do not attempt to implement every policy at once. Divide your checklist into distinct evolutionary tiers:
 - **Core Steps:** Establish simple, zero-to-low-cost foundations, such as compiling public caregiving resource directories, such as the Colorado Respite Coalition's "[Resources for Caregivers](#)" page, and verifying that existing sick leave policies can explicitly be used to care for a sick relative.
 - **Comprehensive Steps:** Build out internal scaffolding, including robust Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), localized legal and financial counseling resources, and comprehensive FMLA and FAMI navigational guidance.
 - **Advanced Steps:** Invest in structural benefits, such as subsidized back-up home care options, integrated caregiving benefit portals, or dedicated paid family leave programs.

Step 4: Determine Next Steps

Becoming more caregiving-friendly can be simple and does not need to mean reinventing the wheel. Please visit the resource section at the end of this toolkit for ideas that might work well in your organization. With your team, discuss the options that might be a good fit for your workplace. There is no perfect recipe to help an organization become more caregiving-friendly. Rather, there are a variety of tools available to help employers determine the best options for their culture, structure and employees' needs.

Talking about how to become more family and caregiving-friendly can become overwhelming without breaking down specific ideas and gaps to address. You don't have to take everything on at once. In fact, it's best to start small and evaluate progress along the way by checking in with employees.

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As you begin to implement ideas, make sure you have a plan to communicate them with employees. You may have a great idea, but if employees do not know or understand it, it's not likely to succeed. Furthermore, consider how to help managers buy into the culture shift around caregiving. If employees sense that their managers do not support new benefits or policies, they may be hesitant to access them.

Resources Available through the Colorado Respite Coalition

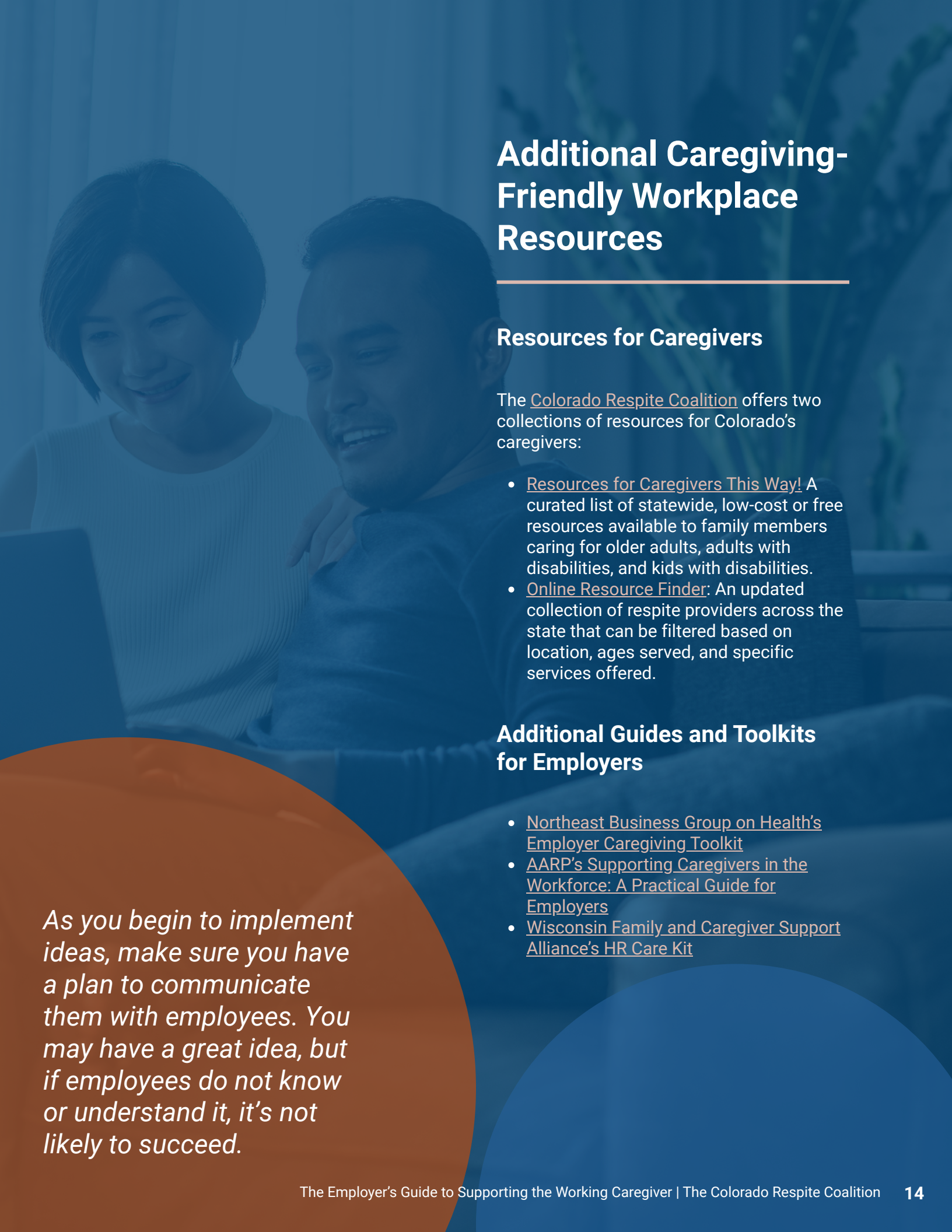
A program of Easterseals Colorado, the Colorado Respite Coalition (CRC) is a vital statewide resource for caregivers of individuals of all ages with extensive care needs. Working with a coordinated coalition of community partners, we promote awareness of and access to respite care services and resources that help improve the quality of life for caregivers and the individuals they care for.



To help support employers as they become more caregiving-friendly, the Colorado Respite Coalition is pleased to offer complimentary one-hour advising sessions to any Colorado employer interested in learning how to better support caregivers. Depending on the employer's location and availability, advising sessions may be offered in person or by video conference. To take advantage of this offer, please contact the Colorado Respite Coalition at crcinfo@eastersealscolorado.org or (303) 233-1666 x 8.

Additionally, the Colorado Respite Coalition can share ideas regarding Lunch 'n' Learn topics, speaker series, and other ideas to increase caregiving support in your workplace. Lunch 'n' Learn topics might include:

- Caregiving support and basic resources
- Respite care
- Nutrition
- Exercise and physical wellness
- Financial and legal aspects of caregiving
- Stress management and self-care
- Compassion fatigue
- Work-life balance
- Therapeutic journaling
- Dementia 101



Additional Caregiving-Friendly Workplace Resources

Resources for Caregivers

The [Colorado Respite Coalition](#) offers two collections of resources for Colorado's caregivers:

- [Resources for Caregivers This Way!](#) A curated list of statewide, low-cost or free resources available to family members caring for older adults, adults with disabilities, and kids with disabilities.
- [Online Resource Finder](#): An updated collection of respite providers across the state that can be filtered based on location, ages served, and specific services offered.

Additional Guides and Toolkits for Employers

- [Northeast Business Group on Health's Employer Caregiving Toolkit](#)
- [AARP's Supporting Caregivers in the Workforce: A Practical Guide for Employers](#)
- [Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance's HR Care Kit](#)

As you begin to implement ideas, make sure you have a plan to communicate them with employees. You may have a great idea, but if employees do not know or understand it, it's not likely to succeed.

Colorado and National Caregiver Resource Directory

1. Core State Agencies & System Navigators

These regional hubs assist families with long-term planning, option counseling, and accessing state or Medicaid-funded care options.

- **Aging and Disability Resources for Colorado (ADRC):** Provides information and personalized referrals for long-term services and supports for adults with disabilities and older adults. Options counselors offer impartial decision support regarding local resources.
 - *Contact:* 1-844-COL-ADRC (1-844-265-2372)
- **Colorado Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs):** Sixteen regional agencies serving individuals aged 60+ and their caregivers via federal Older Americans Act funding. Services include case management, transportation, meal delivery, and in-home support.
 - *Contact:* [Colorado Association of Area Agencies on Aging](#)

- **Case Management Agencies (CMAs):** Regional agencies that help individuals and families access Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers and Community First Choice (CFC) for children and adults with physical, intellectual, or developmental disabilities. CMAs provide waiver application assistance and intake assessments.
 - *Contact:* [Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing](#)
- **County Human Services Departments:** Managed by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), these county offices connect residents to local independent living supports, child and family services, housing assistance, and food/financial aid.
 - *Contact:* [Find Your Colorado County Office](#)



You don't have to take everything on at once. In fact, it's best to start small and evaluate progress along the way by checking in with employees.



2. Respite, Peer Support, & Crisis Networks

Immediate, practical solutions to prevent employee burnout and manage sudden family emergencies.

- **Colorado Respite Coalition (CRC):** A program of Easterseals Colorado that provides an Online Resource Finder to locate local respite care providers, financial assistance grants for care breaks, and specialized caregiver training courses, such as Stress Busting for Family Caregivers.
 - *Contact:* 303-233-1666 ext. 8 | CRCInfo@eastersealscolorado.org | ColoradoRespiteCoalition.org
- **Ability Connection Colorado – Parent to Parent (P2P):** A peer-led network connecting families across Colorado who are raising children with disabilities and special healthcare needs. Offers mutual encouragement, informational support, and localized resource sharing.
 - *Contact:* 1-877-472-7201 | abilityconnectioncolorado.org
- **Colorado Crisis Services & 988:** A statewide 24/7 hotline operated by trained professionals for anyone experiencing any form of mental health, emotional, or substance use crisis. It is also a vital lifeline for friends and family members seeking guidance on how to support a loved one.
 - *Contact:* Call 988 or 1-844-493-8255 | Text "TALK" to 38255 | coloradocrisiservices.org
- **2-1-1 Colorado:** A comprehensive national dialing service that connects users to localized resources for housing, utility assistance, food access, legal matters, and community emergency aid.
 - *Contact:* Dial 2-1-1 | 211colorado.org

3. Benefits & Financial Application Assistance

Navigating public programs is notoriously complex. These groups act as intermediaries to help families secure financial and medical aid.

- **Colorado PEAK (Program Eligibility and Application Kit):** The centralized state portal for employees to securely apply for and manage public assistance benefits, including Health First Colorado (Medicaid), food assistance (SNAP), energy bills, and child care subsidies.
 - Contact: colorado.gov/PEAK
- **Certified Application Assistance Sites (CAAS):** Community-based organizational sites mapped across the state to provide hands-on help navigating medical benefit applications.
 - Contact: [Colorado CAAS Locator Map](#)
- **Easterseals Colorado Disability Benefits Services (DBS):** Provides professional assistance with Social Security disability applications (SSI/SSDI), alongside personalized benefits counseling and specialized employment re-entry programs.
 - Contact: 303-233-1666 ext. 230 | easterseals.com/co
- **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) & Caregiver Support Program:** Offers clinical services, mental health care, health insurance coordination, and direct monthly financial stipends for designated family caregivers of veterans.
 - Contact: 1-844-MY-VA-311 | Support Line: 1-855-260-3274 | caregiver.va.gov
- **MyFriendBen Colorado:** A tool to check eligibility for local, state, and federal public benefits.
 - Contact: <https://co.myfriendben.org/>



Navigating public programs is notoriously complex. But there are supports in place to make it easier.



4. National Strategy & Advocacy Foundations

These national organizations are essential for HR departments building employee resource groups (ERGs) and tracking workplace trends.

- **Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA):**
Focuses on improving the daily quality of life for family caregivers through detailed educational sheets, multi-lingual digital resources, and structured web-based support groups.
◦ Contact: [caregiver.org](https://www.caregiver.org)
- **Caregiver Action Network (CAN):**
Provides comprehensive peer guidance, educational toolkits, and a dedicated, free "Caregiver Help Desk" that employees can contact directly for real-time problem-solving.
◦ Contact: [caregiveraction.org](https://www.caregiveraction.org)
- **The National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC):** A premier coalition dedicated to policy research and national advocacy, serving as an excellent resource for corporate benefits directors tracking industry best practices.
◦ Contact: [caregiving.org](https://www.caregiving.org)

5. Disability & Disease-Specific Local Chapters

This list represents primary foundational resources that are localized to Colorado and is not a complete list. If your employee is looking for a niche support group or a specific health condition resource not listed here, starting an options-counseling session with their regional ADRC may be the best next step.

- [Alzheimer's Association \(Colorado Chapter\)](#)
- [Lewy Body Dementia Association](#)
- [Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration](#)
- [American Cancer Society \(Colorado\)](#)
- [The Arc of Colorado](#) (Developmental & Intellectual Disabilities)
- [Autism Society of Colorado](#)
- [Brain Injury Association of Colorado](#)
- [DeafBlind Services](#)
- [Colorado Health Network](#) (for People Living with HIV)
- [Epilepsy Foundation](#) (Colorado & Wyoming)
- [Huntington's Disease Society of America](#) (Rocky Mountain Chapter)
- [Multiple Sclerosis Society](#) (Colorado, Utah & Wyoming)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI) Colorado
- [Illuminate Colorado](#) (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum)
- [Parkinson Association of the Rockies](#)
- [Personal Assistance Services of Colorado](#) (PASCO)
- [Rocky Mountain Down Syndrome Association](#)
- [Spina Bifida Association of Colorado](#)

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COLORADO RESPITE COALITION
A Program of Easterseals Colorado

www.coloradorespitecoalition.org