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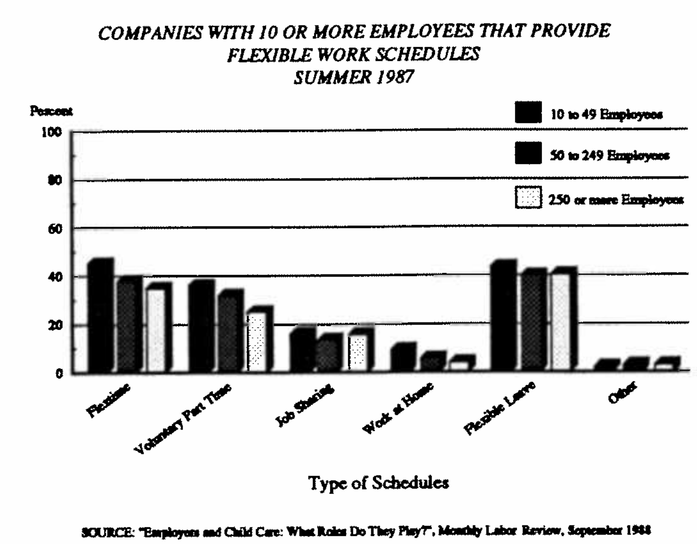
THE CHILD CARE CONNECTION: PART II

by Lorraine Faulds

NOTE: The first part of "The Child Care Connection" appeared in the June issue of the Labor Market Perspective and dealt with the need for child care, the history of child care in this country, the effects of child care on working parents and examples of what companies are doing to support a family-friendly attitude.

This part is concerned with types of benefits companies are offering, cost of child care, elder care options and those caught in both child care and elder care circles, the so-called *sandwich generation.*



With 26.1 million children nationwide requiring some sort of care while Mom and Dad work, it is obvious that policies pertaining to families are vitally important to both parents and employers. Whether it's a small textile plant in South Carolina or a large advertising firm in New York City, companies need to know how they can attract and retain parents as productive employees.

There are many benefit options available for employers to offer to their workers. A decade ago, slightly more than 100 companies nationally offered some type of child care assistance. Today, there are 5,000 who support working parents in some way.[1] Because companies and their employees vary, so do the solutions offered for child care problems. There are basically four types of benefits for working families: direct child care, resource and referral, financial assistance, and family-oriented policies.

DIRECT CHILD CARE

The option first thought of by businesses is usually on-site or near-site child care centers, although only 775 U.S. companies (500 of which are hospitals) offer this benefit.[2] Near-site or on-site (also called in-house) programs offer parents quality care which is close enough to allow parents to visit their children, respond quickly to an emergency, and feel assured that their child is close and well cared for. This, in turn, enhances recruitment, improves employee morale and aids public relations within the community. Companies usually provide building space, and pay for utilities and salaries of care providers. Many hire outside firms to manage the day-to-day operation of the center.

The Stride Rite Corporation, maker of children's footwear, was the first major employer to offer on-site care. Chairman and CEO Arnold Hiatt figures that because of the center, Stride Rite saves $22,000 per employee by retaining experienced, quality workers and avoiding the training of replacements. The organization is making huge strides in family-oriented issues by providing up to 18 weeks of unpaid leave or a flexible 20-hour schedule in times of family emergencies.[3]

There are many variations of this option. Besides on-site and near-site centers, which can be parent run, foundation funded or contracted to an outside child care company, there are also consortium centers where a group of employers work together to start a shared center. One such facility is the Atlanta Downtown Child Development Center started by Rich's Department Store. Rich's and four other businesses shared equally in start-up costs and each was allotted 20 slots in the center.[4] Due to the small number of slots available to each company, this type of center is perfect for companies with fewer working parent employees and for such facilities as business parks. In South Carolina, Gene-Gap, a downtown Columbia day care center, distributes 250 slots to such companies as Colonial Life, SCE&G and HealthSouth, with at least half of the slots available to the public.

All care centers are categorized by the number of children cared for in the facility. A *child day-care center* is a center caring for 13 or more children, such as an on-site or consortium center. *Group day care homes* care for 7-to-12 children whereas *family day care homes* have a limit of no more than six children. Group day care homes and family day care homes are usually run (as the name implies) out of an individual's home.

As of October 1991, according to the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS), there were 1,501 child day-care centers; 342 group day-care homes; and 1,473 family day-care homes in the state. Care centers can be licensed, approved or registered with DSS depending on the number of children receiving care and/or the center's hours of operation.

Family day-care centers are another option some companies are choosing. Usually, homes become part of a company's network after a favorable evaluation and training. Start-up costs and fees for this type of child care are usually less and care providers may be available outside the company's normal work hours. A network of family day-care homes in Phoenix, Arizona was established by America West Airlines and, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Steelcase, Inc. provides training and support for homes in their network.[5]

In 1989, a survey was conducted by John Fernandez of AT&T to determine how children of working parents were being cared for during the day. He found that an astonishing 23 percent of school-age children cared for themselves when not in school. Day-care centers cared for 19 percent; family day care, 15 percent; adult members of the household, 14 percent; other relatives, 12 percent; older siblings, 6 percent; before/after school programs, 6 percent; other arrangements, 6 percent; and someone coming to the child's home, 1 percent.[6]

Work hours rarely coincide with school hours or summer vacations, so care for school-age children is a major concern. Hoffman-LaRoche and Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center provide before-and after-school care for children, and 3M in Minnesota contracts with a local YMCA to expand summer day-camp hours and transport

employees' children from the company child care center to the camp.[7]

The 23 percent of children coming home to an empty house equates to approximately 11 million children nationwide. Luckily, some of these *latch-key kids* are not totally alone. Companies are starting or contributing to *warm lines*. A warm line is a telephone number staffed by counselors who provide support and information to children who are home alone before or after school and during school vacations. The counselors are there to assist in a crisis, answer questions or simply to calm a frightened or lonely child. Phonefriend, Inc. in State College, Pennsylvania has created a model warm-line program and provides a start-up package to companies and agencies for a nominal fee.

RESOURCE AND REFERRAL

The number of resource and referral (R&R) services has increased dramatically in the last decade. These services are popular with companies because they are inexpensive, easy to start, and take little supervision. R&R services may include child care referrals, parent seminars and workshops, counseling, and resource development. Work/Family Directions, a professional R&R development company in Boston, has contracted with IBM to serve over 200 IBM worksites. This project yielded the start-up of 4,500 family day-care homes, 350 centers, and 150 individual care providers. Employees looking for care receive at least three referrals to providers that have openings. Working parents at RTE Corporation in Milwaukee receive a packet containing lists of local child care centers, information on how to choose a quality child care center, instruction on the federal child care tax credit, and information about flexible spending accounts to pay for child care.[8]

In South Carolina, there is a network of resource and referral services. Companies including NCNB, IBM, Aetna Insurance, NCR, DuPont and Marriot use this network to help support parental employees in all areas of the state. The network also holds parenting seminars, performs needs assessments and provides corporate consultation. Fees for these services are dependent on several factors including the number of employees with children or in their childbearing years, and projected use of the resource and referral service. The network includes Yes, Inc. which serves the Midlands of South Carolina; Greenville's Child serving the upstate; Child Care Options in Charleston; and Child Care Resources in Charlotte, North Carolina which serves York County.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance is high on the working parent's list of desired benefits. In many cases, the cost of child care is so high that financial assistance is vital if a parent is to remain employed. The costs of child care must preface any discussion of financial assistance options.

In 1986, approximately $14 billion was spent in the United States on child care by families with children under age 15.[9] Child care services are now the fourth largest expenditure for families with children after food, housing and taxes.[10] Parents spend anywhere from $1,500 to $10,000 a year for child care services depending on geographical location. Boston is the most expensive area, averaging $109 a week. The list of the ten least expensive cities is topped by Ogden, Utah at $38 a week and includes Columbia, South Carolina.[11] According to Martin O'Connell, an economist with the Census Bureau, weekly child care fees have increased as much as eight percent a year, exceeding changes in the consumer price index by at least one percent. (Last year's consumer price index rose 6.1 percent).[12]

Even though child care costs have increased, those working in the child care field do not usually see those dollars. According to the 1989-90 South Carolina Wage Survey, child care workers earned an average of $4.57 an hour. Service station attendants were paid $5.31 an hour. These low wages have a snowball effect. The low compensation causes a high turnover rate for child care staff. The turnover rate for child care workers is 42 percent, one of the highest in the United States.[13] Changes in a child's caregiver not only affect the child but the working parents as well, which may, in turn, cause diminished effectiveness on the job.

Financial assistance from employers comes in many forms. There are vendor discounts at local care centers, vendor plans, subsidies for expenses (also known as a voucher system), or salary reductions that net tax savings. LaPetite Academy has 550 centers in 27 states and offers a 10 percent discount to 160 employers. Many of these employers match the discount with a 10 percent subsidy. In Orlando, Florida, the 4C's Child Care Assurance Plan lets employers subsidize 25 percent to 50 percent of child care expenses for its employees. The Assurance Plan gives referrals and counseling, monitors care providers, and handles payments of subsidies.[14]

Employees participating in the Internal Revenue Service's Dependent Care Assistance Program or Flexible Benefits Program may reduce their salaries by up to $5,000 a year and deposit that money into a flexible spending account. Because the money is deducted before taxes are taken out, not only does the employee save money by not paying federal or social security taxes, but the employer is not required to pay social security or unemployment taxes on that money.

A program called "Promise Jobs" in Iowa helps unemployed residents with transportation, training, health care and child care. The Iowa Department of Employment Services helps foot the bill for child care expenses while clients are in the program and also supplies transportation and job search training. The Iowa Department of Human Services refers participants in the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program to their local job service for Promise Jobs and also helps pay for child care for up to six months after a client has found employment. This system has resulted in financial independence for approximately 1,000 people since the program began. Montana, Massachusetts and Maryland have similar programs in place.

FAMILY-ORIENTED POLICIES

Parenting is not a rigid, predictable activity. Companies who want to retain high caliber workers realize this and make an effort to have family-oriented policies such as family sick leave, flextime, job sharing, part-time employment and flexplace work.

With family sick leave, a portion of a worker's sick leave can be used specifically for the care of an ill family member. The State of South Carolina allows employees to use 8 days of their annual sick leave to care for sick family members.

Flextime plans vary, but there are usually some requirements. Employees are expected to work a specified number of hours each week and usually be present during a daily core period such as 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. A 1990 survey found that 50 percent of U.S. companies offered flextime.[15]

Job sharing involves two people sharing one full-time job, usually splitting the benefits as well as the salary. Two thousand employees at the Rolscreen Company in Pella, Iowa were offered a job-sharing option. Within 50 pairs of assembly line workers who accepted the offer, absenteeism fell from 5.8 percent to 1.2

percent.[16] Even with lower pay and few benefits, some people prefer the freedom of part-time work. The Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare has found that part-time employees had a lower turnover rate than full-time employees and carried 89 percent of a full case load.[17]

Presently, 15,500 people work at home in nonagricultural jobs, but the Office of Technology Assessment reports that 15 million computer jobs could be relocated to homes.[18] Wisconsin Physicians Services in Madison hires 100 people to work at home. The employees are paid below union wage, saving the company money, and they enjoy part-time, at-home work.[19] Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina, among others, offers a flexplace option in which employees can work from their homes using company-provided computers.

There is not one singular solution to all family care problems. Companies and the people who work for them are different and so too are the solutions, but there are some that are more desirable to caregiving employees. The most frequently requested solutions to family care problems are flexible work options; financial assistance; and quality, affordable day care. A survey conducted in 1990 found that 37 percent rank flexible work options number one on the list of desired benefits. This category includes flextime (such as part-time work and job sharing), flexplace and flexible benefits. Twenty-five percent said they would be helped by financial assistance including vouchers, discounts, payroll deduction and corporate contributions. Care centers are on the wish list for 19 percent of the surveyed employees.[20]

EMPLOYER CONCERNS

The cost of family-friendly benefits is probably the major concern for employers. Some benefits can be quite expensive initially, but there is such an array of alternatives that there is a benefit plan for any size business.

Flexible work options, the most desired options, are probably the least expensive. Part-time work, flexplace, job sharing and flextime require planning time but can be very inexpensive. Relaxing categories of leave time so that parents can use their earned time for anything from caring for a sick child to Christmas shopping helps ease the conflict between work and family, thus improving employee productivity.

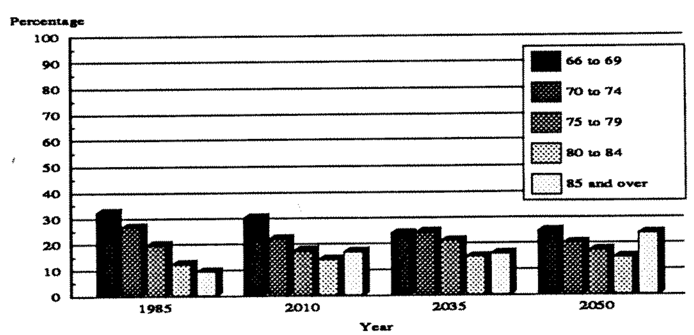
Financial assistance is another popular benefit with working parents. This option, of course, does have a price tag, but for some parents, it's the only way to stay employed. At NCNB, in South Carolina, subsidies of up to 50 percent of child care expenses incurred in DSS-licensed facilities are given to qualifying employees.

Direct child care is the most expensive benefit offered. For many small businesses, it is not an affordable option. For larger companies, the advantage--lower turnover, reduced absenteeism and improved productivity--are worth the start-up costs. Direct on-site care centers are also an asset in communities where there is limited or low quality child care.

A supportive work group and understanding supervisors are benefits not usually mentioned by employers or employees. To working parents, a sensitive boss can ease a great deal of the tension between work and home. This sensitivity can be provided at no cost to the employer. An American Management Association briefing by Dr. Renee Magid states "A non-supportive manager is almost always predictive of employee anxiety and dissatisfaction. In fact, the single influence that has the most negative effect on work life is a nonsupportive manager...an insensitive, inflexible manager will almost invariably increase tension and decrease productivity. *Moreover, insensitive managers give employees the* *impression however wrong that the entire company is insensitive."*[21]

There is some speculation by employers as to whether offering family care benefits is fair to employees without caregiving responsibilities. An employee who receives any kind of corporate assistance for family concerns tends to be more loyal to the company, to miss fewer days and to be more productive at work. All of this affects the work environment, including employees not receiving such benefits. Employers are aware that family-friendly policies will not be utilized by all employees all the time. However, when child-care responsibilities, which will affect one third to one half of the work force at some time during a working life, are considered along with elder-care burdens (affecting 15-to-20 percent of the work force), it is obvious that employer-supported family-friendly policies will be used by a majority of the work force.[22]

PROJECTED ELDERLY POPULATION BY AGE
1985-2050



Source: "Women in the Middle", E. Brody

An answer to the equity debate is flexible benefits, also called cafeteria plans. These plans may include child care, elder care, longer vacations, expanded health insurance, savings plans or enhanced retirement. At any time in an employee's life, there would be benefits offered suited to his or her situation.

THE SANDWICH GENERATION

The term *sandwich generation* is fairly new to the field of benefit options and describes those employees who are caring for both their children and their elderly parents or their spouse's parents. These employees are usually married women, in their mid-forties, in households with an average income in the mid-twenties. More than half are employed.[23]

Currently, an estimated 1.8 million women are members of this sandwich generation. With more women postponing childbirth, the number will continue to rise. The longer a family waits to have children, the more likely it is that they will also have elder-care responsibilities.

In a survey of 1,836 state government employees, the South Carolina Division of Human Resources Management found that 32 percent have elder-care responsibilities and 47.5 percent of those are dual caregivers for both their children and a senior adult.[24]

ELDER CARE

Currently, 12 percent of the United States population is over the age of 65. By the year 2050, that figure is expected to rise to 23 percent. In the next decade in South Carolina, the 65-and-over-age group is expected to increase 75 percent.[25]

With approximately 13.5 million people who are spouses or children of disabled elders, the potential of people in the work force becoming a primary caregiver for an elderly person is one in five. Also, while child care can last 18 years, elder care can last twice that long.[26]

Caregivers for seniors have responsibilities ranging from assistance with daily living (eating, toileting, dressing and bathing) to financial assistance, transportation and housework. These duties, like child care responsibilities, affect employees' performance on the job. Seventy-five percent of surveyed workers reported unscheduled time off from work due to elder-care duties. Lateness was reported by 73 percent, absenteeism by 67 percent, and excessive use of the phone at work by 64 percent. Forty-six percent reported decreased productivity.[27]

In South Carolina, 49 percent of elder-care-giving state employees devoted less than 10 hours to the care of an aged adult. Seventeen percent give 10-to-20 hours, four percent give 21-to-30 hours, and eight percent devote over 30 hours each week to elder care. In turn, 57.5 percent stated that they have taken time away from work to help an older family member.[28]

As with child care, companies are beginning to respond to the needs of those with elder care duties but not as quickly or with as much variety. A survey conducted by the New York Business Group on Health found that the most common elder-care benefits offered were flextime, caregiver informational fairs and pamphlets. As with child care, the employees surveyed wanted flexible work options, day care and financial assistance.

WHAT'S BEING DONE IN ELDER CARE

Companies offering elder-care benefits usually offer a flexible time option where accrued leave time can be used for the care of an aged loved one. Pitney Bowes, IBM and Campbell Soup all have generous family-care leave policies. PepsiCo, Travellers Insurance and Mobil Oil sponsor information fairs, support groups and counseling for elder-care providers. Stride Rite is possibly the best known for innovative elder-care solutions. They have an intergenerational on-site care center at their offices in Boston. The center has space for children and senior adults. Children and elderly parents of Stride Rite employees interact in the center through play, field trips and storytelling, promoting a sense of extended family.

Work/Family Directions, a Boston-based resource and referral network, works in conjunction with the resource and referral network in South Carolina and with the South Carolina Commission on Aging to offer information on elder-care services in the state. Child Care/Senior Care Solutions in Columbia also offers information for care of seniors as does Family Futures, also in Columbia.

Responding to the current American family in which family members are spread over a large geographical area, the federal government and the State of Illinois Department of Aging along with the National Association of State Units on Aging, has installed a toll-free information system called Elderlink. The system assists caregivers living outside the state of Illinois in obtaining services for family members residing within the state's boundaries. Elderlink will also help Illinois-resident caregivers find services in other states. The system has hopes of becoming a nationwide network for elder care services.

In cooperation with the state's Department of Human Services and Department on Aging, the Texas Employment Commission maintains a statewide clearinghouse of child care and elder-care information. The Work and Family Resource Clearinghouse is a data base accessible in every Job Service local office which contains child care and elder-care resource and referral agencies. Names of specific care providers are available through the Department of Human Services and the Department on Aging. Currently the system's budget is partially supported by fees paid to obtain birth certificate copies. The Texas Employment Commission is also trying to find ways to implement a program whereby grants will be given to employers and dependent-care center operators to build or upgrade benefit packages and/or facilities.

All indicators point to the increasing need for elder-care benefits in corporate America. Companies who want to attract and retain productive employees should start assessing and implementing elder-care solutions now.

CONCLUSION

The Women's Division of the United Auto Workers union has passed resolutions asking for "...counseling services that would include family problems as well as work...maternity leave without loss of seniority, insurance plans that include maternity benefits [and] improved child care facilities...". These resolutions don't seem unusual for the 1990s; however, they were passed at a conference held in 1944.[29]

Former Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole said "The challenges we face in building a quality workforce are many. But so, too, are the opportunities." Family-friendly policies are a vital building block for that quality workforce. Corporate America is starting to realize their importance and relationship to a productive workforce. They won't be doing it to help their employees. They'll be doing it to help themselves...and their futures.

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Sources of Information

Resource and Referral Agencies

South Carolina Commission on Aging
400 Arbor Lake Drive
Suite B500
Columbia, SC 29223
(803) 735-0210 or 1-800-868-9095 (Toll free in S.C.)

Clearinghouse on Implementation of Child Care and Elder Care Services (CHOICES)
Women's Bureau
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, DC 20210
1-800-827-5335

(For the Midlands)
Yes, Inc.
2129 Santee Avenue
Columbia, SC 29205

(For the Upstate)
Greenville's Child, Inc.
100 Mallard Street
Greenville, SC 29604

(For the Lowcountry)
Child Care Options
1521 Waptoo Road
Charleston, SC 29402

(For York County)
Child Care Resources
700 Kenilworth Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28204

Childcare Seniorcare Solutions
P.O. Box 24617
Columbia, SC 29224

Family Futures
7338 Broad River Road
Irmo, SC 29063

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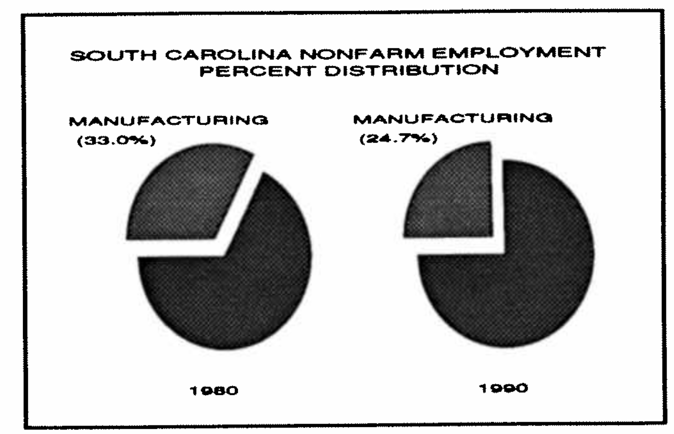
MANUFACTURING IN SOUTH CAROLINA 1980 - 1990

by Glenn Murray

South Carolina began the 1980's with a major recession, but then proceeded to post the longest peacetime expansion on record. Trade and services, particularly in the business and health sectors, fueled job growth following the slowdown of 1981-1982. Overall, six of seven major industries saw increases over the decade.

The lone exception was manufacturing. Marginal jobs were eliminated while marginal plants were closed. The truth is, many manufacturing industries never recovered from the recession. Many others returned to previous production levels, but did so with fewer employees. In 1980, factories employed one of every three nonfarm workers in South Carolina. By 1990, that figure had deteriorated to one in four (see graph).



This decrease in the percentage of manufacturing jobs was a reflection of tremendous growth in all industries except manufacturing. Trade and services averaged increases of 4.5% and 6.4% a year over the 1980-1990 period. In fact, services did not experience any years of negative growth, while trade lost jobs only in 1982. Other average gains ranged from a low of 1.9% in government to a modest 3.5% in construction. Contrast these rates with that of manufacturing, which lost an average of 0.2% a year, and it is clear why factory jobs account for a smaller portion of nonfarm employment than they did ten years ago.

However, there were some bright spots in manufacturing throughout the 1980's. Due to increased investment in capital equipment and heavy foreign demand, durables grew 12.6% from 1980 to 1990. Strong groups over the ten-year period included fabricated metal products and primary metal industries, up 23.1% and 15.8%, respectively. This growth was surprising since, nationwide, the metal industries were weak and are projected to be even weaker in years to come. In addition, transportation equipment added 6,800 jobs, while industrial machinery and equipment grew by 5,300.

Positive growth within manufacturing groups was not limited solely to the durable-good sector. Nondurable groups adding positions included chemicals and allied products, up 6,500 (19.5%), and paper and allied products, 2,600 (17.7%) higher. Printing and publishing was the only manufacturing group that registered consistent growth throughout the 1980-1990 period, including the early recessionary years. Overall, printing in South