

Supporting Families 24/7: Creating Balance for Working Families with Children who have Special Needs

Program Description

Striking a balance between home and work can be challenging for everyone. Living in our current economic culture, with long work days, and the appeal of multitasking, the availability of technology, such as the internet and smart phones can blur the lines between our professional and personal lives. Most people struggle with the ever increasing demands of both work and home. Having a family member with a disability further complicates these issues. More parents and caregivers are caring for a child or adult with at least one disability, special need, or special health care need. These employee caregivers experience greater stress, financial burdens, and other issues related to effective work/life balance. For many families, economic realities have created competing demands between work and family responsibilities. With the prevalence of single parent households and 2 parent wage earners, the lines between the workplace and home are blurred.

For example:

- In the US approximately 8.6% of employees will be caring for a child under the age of 18 with special health care needs (Center for Child and Adolescent Health Care Policy, n.d.).
- Nearly 22% of US households have one or more children ages 09-17 with special health care needs (US Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2008).
- Nearly 10% of families who have children with special health care needs spend 11 or more hours per week providing and/or coordinating their child's health care (US Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2008)
- More than 18% of families who have children with special health care needs said that their children's health conditions caused financial problems for the family (US Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2008)
- Employees with children with special needs are less productive; may feel overwhelmed and experience greater stress and sense of isolation
- Nearly 10% of families with children with special health care needs spend 11 or more hours per week providing or coordinating their child's health care.

Family Support Program helps families and service providers find information and resources needed to strengthen and support families as they navigate the complex world of disabilities. Family Support Program helps parents and caregivers find social and emotional support by facilitating connections to peer support and other community based support activities offered in local communities. This workshop provides an overview of work-life balance issues and the unique challenges on employees with children who have developmental disabilities or other special needs and offers strategies for successfully managing competing demands.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain impact of having a child with a disability or special need on employees;
2. List the benefits of work-life balance for employee, employer, and family;

3. Outline strategies to support work-life balance;
4. Explain the services and supports that exist to foster work-life balance.

Target Audience

Employers, Administrators, Supervisors, HR Staff, Employees with Children with disabilities, special needs

Contact Hours

3.0 to 6.0 contact hours

Program Agenda

Introductions

The impact of having a child with disabilities or special needs

Benefits of work-life balance

BREAK

Group Brainstorming – Work-life balance strategies

Formal and informal resources to support families and caregivers

Faculty

Tamara Norris, MSSW, MPA is Clinical Associate Professor and Director of the Family Support Program and the Family Support Network™ University Office at the UNC School of Social Work. Ms. Norris has over 25 years of experience developing innovative approaches to improving outcomes for families and children and promoting family support services for families with children who have special healthcare needs. Her passion is building the capacity of communities, organizations, and families to enable children who have disabilities to grow to live the lives they envision. She has administered family support initiatives with state and federal funding in the areas of family navigation; child maltreatment prevention; family support for military families; and emergency preparedness for individuals who have disabilities and their families. Ms. Norris has Master of Science in Social Work and Master of Public Administration degrees from Columbia University.

Barbara Leach is a Family Support Specialist and Special Projects Coordinator. She joined the Family Support Program at UNC, School of Social Work in 2005. She has over 30 years of experience as a child and family advocate for families with children who have mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, and other special needs. In addition to providing information and referral for families and providers, Ms. Leach serves as a family advisor on multiple state and national committees that work collaboratively to transform systems so that they better meet the needs of children with disabilities and their families. She presents extensively on topics relating to supporting families, family advocacy, family engagement, family/provider partnership, cultural competence, and systems change. Ms. Leach is passionate about lifting the voices of diverse families and to promoting families as partners to co-create and develop services and systems that improve outcomes so that individuals with disabilities can live their best lives – healthy, independent, and self-determined.

