



Leave Policies Beyond Childhood: Analysis of Leave Provisions for Informal Caregivers of Adults and Seniors

*Presented at the 8th Annual Seminar of the International
Network on Leave Policies and Research, Reykjavik, Iceland*

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Rationale for policy development on caregiving leave

- Population aging – a key factor affecting national economies, health provision, individual and family well-being
- In most countries, family/friend caregivers provide the majority of care to those with a chronic health problem or disability
- Shrinking labour force – with increasing proportion managing work and care (the caregiving crunch)
- Impacts on gender equality, particularly economic costs to women of leaving the labour force to provide care
- Leave policies are part of a package of policies (long-term care, cash for care, pensions) needed to address issues



Variety of caregiving situations beyond early childhood

- Illness or injury to older children
 - Adult /senior family members with acute illness, needing a period of recuperation
 - Adult family members with chronic long-term health conditions or disability (including adult children)
 - Elder care – particularly for parents, in-laws, others
 - Palliative care
 - Close friends
- ** Adult/elder care is less predictable, more episodic. Individuals may be caring for more than 1 adult simultaneously; children and seniors

By the numbers.....

- Canada: 2.3 M employed caregivers age 45+
 - 37% of employed women
 - 28% of employed men (2007 GSS)
- US:
 - 42% of US workforce (54.6M) provided elder care in past 5 years
 - 49% expect to provide elder care in the coming 5 years (2008 NSCW)

In Canada

- In 2007, 3.8 million Canadians age 45+ (29%) provided care to adults and elders – 75% were employed
- Most employed caregivers combine informal care and full-time work
- More than half cared for parents, 1 in 5 cared for non-kin
- Many care for long periods, more than one period or for more than one person
- Most employed caregivers live in the same community with the care receiver:
 - 20% co-resided
 - 15% provide support to someone in residential care
- 1 in 6 employed caregivers provide care from a distance, adding travel time and additional expenses

Employed caregivers

- One quarter of Canadian employees with eldercare responsibilities report caregiver strain – physical/financial/emotional
- On average, employed caregivers spend the equivalent of 1 full day/week providing care and support (8.0 hrs/week)
- Women spend more time caregiving, provide more personal care
- Women incur more employment consequences (more missed days from work, more likely to take hours off work to provide care/support/ attend medical appointments).
- Women were also more likely to turn down a job offer/promotion, quit or lose a job, and retire early to provide care (About 4% of women retired early, 1.1% of men)



Leave Policies for Family Carers

- Relatively recent compared to development of maternity and parental leave
- Two thirds of OECD countries have leave for carers – various conditions apply
- Paid leave is restricted to less than half of the countries
 - See OECD (2011). *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long Term Care* – Chapter 4: Policies to support family carers



Analyzing Leaves for Informal Caregivers

- What conditions of care are included?
- Restrictions on relationship to care receiver? Co-residence?
- Length of leave
- Unpaid? Paid? To what degree?
- Eligibility criteria (duration of employment)
- Institutional mechanism, level of government responsible
- Take-up? Effectiveness?

Case Study: Canada

- 2004 - 2005:
 - Federal government introduced six weeks of **Compassionate Care Benefits** (federal policy for partial income replacement)
 - All provincial governments (except Alberta) enact changes to provide job-protected, unpaid leave typically for 8 weeks
 - Intended to allow employees to provide care and support for family members/friends who are gravely ill or at significant risk of death within 26 weeks
- ** Note: requires medical documentation

Case Study: Canada

This approach builds on and mirrors existing institutional arrangements for maternity leave (outside Quebec)

- CCB policy (Employment Insurance)
 - Eligible for benefits if taking leave would result in a reduction of regular earnings by 40% or more
 - Same requirements for eligibility as maternity/parental benefits (600 hrs of work in last 52 weeks)
 - Mandatory 2-week waiting period
 - Remuneration of 55% of average insurable earnings (\$44,200 in 2011) to a maximum of \$468/week
 - Only covers self-employed if self-employed voluntarily opt in to EI system (*rare*)



Case Study: Canada

Unique features of Compassionate Care Benefits:

- Covers a wide range of potential kin relationships
- Can be used to provide care for a relative living outside of Canada if medical documentation is provided.
- Can be shared between family members providing care (if they each qualify)
- Employers can provide supplement to top-up employees' benefits or cover the 2-week waiting period



Evaluation of Compassionate Care Benefits Policy

Take-up rate is low

- Many employees and employers still unaware
- Medical documentation is a problem – especially if condition is not diagnosed with specific trajectory
- Paperwork requirement at a time that is stressful for caregivers
- 2 week waiting period is an impediment; remuneration rate is low
- Does not address many situations that require informal care but is not life-threatening



Additional policies, programs that are needed

Workplace supports for employees with adult/elder care responsibilities

- Flexible work schedules; option for part-time work for a period of time
- Expanded options for leave – paid and unpaid without using one's own sick days or vacation
- Information, referral and support services
- Valuing employees, recognizing their efforts; understanding their situation

Public Policies

- Financial assistance (Caregiver tax credits / monthly caregiver benefits are being discussed)
- Housing and home care policies



Current research project:

Caregiving and Work Study *

A) On-line national survey of senior HR managers across public, private and voluntary sectors of different size to determine:

- Extent to which employers provide flexible work arrangements, paid and unpaid leave, financial assistance, information and support for employees with adult and elder care responsibilities
- Experiences with employees with adult/elder care responsibilities
- Comparisons between supports provided for employees with parental/child care and adult/eldercare responsibilities
- Attitudes, reasons for developing and implementing workplace supports
- Factors that differentiate workplaces that provide more and less support

B) Study of managers' attitudes, experiences and needs for information to support employees with adult/elder care

* Lero, Spinks and Fast

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