

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Working Parents and Return to School Stress

Tips for Employers

By Joel Axler, MD, *National Behavioral Health Leader*



Return-to-school stress is common for both children and their parents as they transition from summer break back to the school routine. For parents, this stress can be exacerbated by the need to balance work responsibilities with new or intensified family obligations. The American Psychological Academy has consistently reported over the last several years that a large number of parents experience increased stress and anxiety during the back-to-school period.

Some of the key sources of return-to-school stress include:



Logistical challenges: Coordinating school drop-offs and pick-ups, managing after-school activities and ensuring children are prepared for school with necessary supplies and uniforms.



Physical health issues: Ensuring their child is healthy, up to date on vaccinations and managing any health conditions.



Financial strain: The cost of school supplies, clothing, extracurricular activities and potentially childcare or after-school programs can add financial pressure.



Emotional stress: Parents may worry about their children adjusting to new teachers, classmates or schools, as well as their academic performance and social interactions.



Time management: Balancing work schedules with school-related responsibilities, such as attending parent-teacher meetings and school events and helping with homework, can be overwhelming.



School safety: Worrying about the overall safety of the school environment, including issues like bullying, violence or emergency preparedness.



How Employers Can Support Parents

Employers can play a significant role in alleviating return-to-school stress for parents by implementing supportive policies and practices. Here are several ways I have seen employers help working parents that do not negatively impact productivity or morale:

1 Flexible Work Options: Allowing parents to work from home, either full-time or part-time, can help them manage school logistics more effectively. Offering flexible start and end times can enable parents to handle school drop-offs and pick-ups without compromising their work commitments.

2 Personal Days: Allowing for personal days or floating holidays that parents can use for school-related events or emergencies.

3 On-Site or Subsidized Childcare: Offering on-site childcare or subsidies for external childcare services can ease the burden on working parents. Working with local organizations to provide after-school care or activities can be beneficial and much appreciated by parents working late hours.

4 Employee Assistance Programs (EAP): Providing access to counseling and support services can help parents manage stress and anxiety. Ensure the EAP offers referrals to resources for parenting, childcare and education-related issues.

5 Peer Networks: Creating support groups or networks within the workplace where parents can share experiences and advice can foster a sense of community and provide practical tips.

6 Manager Training: Training managers to recognize the signs of parental stress and steer to appropriate support can create a more understanding and accommodating work environment.

Encouraging open communication between employees and managers about the challenges of balancing work and family can lead to more supportive and empathetic workplace policies.

By implementing these strategies, employers can help reduce the stress associated with the return to school, supporting both their employees' well-being and their workforces' overall productivity.



About the Author

Dr. Joel Axler, MD, National Behavioral Health Leader

Dr. Axler is a board-certified child, adolescent and adult psychiatrist with more than 30 years of experience in academic, private practice and insurance settings. He is a Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. He remains in clinical practice and serves on several executive committees and organizations, including the Georgia Psychiatric Physicians Association and the Georgia Council on Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.



Find Your Solution at [BBrown.com](https://www.BBrown.com)

Brown & Brown, Inc. and all its affiliates, do not provide legal, regulatory or tax guidance, or advice. If legal advice counsel or representation is needed, the services of a legal professional should be sought. The information in this document is intended to provide a general overview of the topics and services contained herein. Brown & Brown, Inc. and all its affiliates, make no representation or warranty as to the accuracy or completeness of the document and undertakes no obligation to update or revise the document based upon new information or future changes.

©2024 Brown & Brown. All rights reserved.