

7 WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN IMPLEMENT FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE PRACTICES DURING COVID-19

The consequences of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak are unprecedented and felt around the world. The pandemic is heavily affecting labour markets and economies, leaving many businesses struggling to survive. For many working parents and their children, the fast-evolving situation means disrupted education and childcare, family illness and potential loss of household income. By giving working parents the time, information, services and resources they need to cope with the crisis, family-friendly policies and practices can make a critical difference.

UNICEF Canada has created an [online hub](#) of current and reliable information on COVID-19, including Frequently Asked Questions; recommendations to federal, provincial and territorial governments; resources for teachers, parents, teenagers and children; and the latest global updates. [UNICEF](#), [ILO](#) and [UN Women](#) have together developed preliminary recommendations for employers to protect workers and families and mitigate negative consequences stemming from COVID-19. The main points are summarized below and the full report can be accessed [here](#).

1

GRANT FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Flexible work arrangements give workers freedom over when and where they fulfil their job responsibilities. They support workers to meet personal or family needs and during challenging circumstances.

2

SUPPORT WORKING PARENTS WITH SAFE AND APPROPRIATE CHILDCARE OPTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

In the context of widespread school and childcare closures, employers can provide critical support to parents who are faced with limited or no childcare options.

3

PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND TRAINING ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Physical distancing, hand washing and hygiene education are critical ways to avoid spreading of COVID-19. Messaging at the workplace should follow [WHO's advice for the public](#) and working parents should follow [UNICEF's guidance](#) to inform and protect their children.

4

PROVIDE WORKERS WITH GUIDANCE ON HOW TO SEEK MEDICAL SUPPORT

Employers can help direct workers who may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 to medical providers and services by clearly communicating information of local hospitals, health authorities, emergency hotlines and guidance for safe transport to health-care providers.

5

HELP WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES COPE WITH STRESS

Workplaces can provide special support to workers who feel stressed and anxious during the COVID-19 outbreak, and support parents who are helping their children cope with anxiety and fear. Employers should ensure that only reliable information is shared and that all workers have access to psychosocial services.

6

CLOSELY MONITOR AND FOLLOW ADVICE BY NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Employers should monitor advice provided by national and local authorities (e.g. on public health measures and work arrangements) and communicate critical information to the workforce in a timely manner.

7

SUPPORT GOVERNMENT SOCIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

While social protection is a government responsibility, family-friendly policies in the workplace can support these efforts. Employers can identify ways to support government protection measures wherever possible, in line with ILO conventions and recommendations on [Social Security](#) and [Social Protection Floors](#).