

# How to Talk to Your Employer About Child Care

A guide for working parents

Accessible, high-quality child care is essential for Nebraska's economy and quality of life.

As a working parent, you're not only the most important person in your kids' lives—you're an important asset to your employer. Just as your family counts on you to care and provide for them, your boss relies on you to be focused and productive at work. That's where accessible, high-quality child care comes in—it makes it possible for you to develop your career while providing for your family. Knowing your kids are safe and cared for while you're working means you're able to stay fully engaged on the job.

And you're not the only one. More than 75% of Nebraska kids are in some type of care while parents work. The bottom line: access to child care is crucial for our state's economic growth and quality of life.

As more parents juggle family care and work, it's important that employers understand and support their workers. While having a conversation may seem difficult, it's worth your time. This guide provides ideas to help you take that first step in talking to your employer about child care.

## Understand your family care benefits.

Before you talk to your employer, it's important to understand what family-friendly policies or child care support are already in place. Check your employee handbook or schedule a meeting with an HR representative to find out if your employer offers:

- ▶ **Dependent care flexible spending account**  
This is a pre-tax benefit that can be used to pay for child care, preschool and before- or after-school programs.
- ▶ **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**  
Many employers offer work-based support programs that offer free services to assist workers with personal- or work-related challenges, including child and elder care. EAP resources may include short-term counseling, assessment or service referrals.
- ▶ **Child care assistance**  
Some employers may have reserved spots with local providers, offer rate discounts for employees or help cover care costs.
- ▶ **Backup care options**  
On-site facilities and schools may close on short notice due to COVID-19, so backup options are becoming one of the most asked for benefits. Find out if your company has a referral service or options in place for emergency situations.



601 South 13th Street | Suite #600 | Lincoln, NE 68508  
P: 402 261 9671 | [FirstFiveNebraska.org](http://FirstFiveNebraska.org)



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## ■ Share information and insights.

Your employer relies on you to be engaged and get the job done, but when child care challenges crop up, it can be hard to stay focused. As a working parent, you offer valuable insight on juggling parenting and work-life balance. You can help your employer understand the challenges parents deal with daily, from pick-up and drop-off, to bigger issues such as child care accessibility and affordability. Start the conversation on making work “work” with these topics and resources:

- ▶ **What is “quality” child care?**  
Quality child care is delivered in reliable, well-managed environments that ensure the physical and emotional safety of children. In addition, children receive frequent one-on-one interactions with caring adults that are warm, language-rich and educational. These physically and developmentally supportive programs help set kids on a lifelong path to academic success and productive futures.
- ▶ **What types of child care is available in your community?**  
Many working families depend on paid, professional child care providers. These may be licensed or unlicensed depending on how their program is structured. Providers typically fall into one of three categories: home-based, center-based and preschool. Educate your employer on the types of care you and your colleagues rely on.
- ▶ **What are some of the challenges working parents face at your company?**  
Share details to help your employer understand the challenges of maintaining work-life balance. For example, how long is the commute to your provider? Do provider hours line up with work hours? Is child care affordable?
- ▶ **How can your employer be a resource and advocate for quality child care?**  
Business leaders can find resources to support working parents through [My Nebraska Story](#), including [No-Cost/Low-Cost Ways to Support Working Parents](#); [Guidelines for Business Leadership in Child Care](#); and [What employers can do to help working parents with young children](#).

Talking to your employer about your family care needs can lead to positive outcomes for you and your family, your co-workers and your employer.

## TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR EMPLOYER

### ■ The struggle is real.

You’re a valuable asset to your employer. If child care challenges are impacting your productivity, this directly impacts your employer’s bottom line. It may seem daunting to talk to your boss, but remember you’re likely not the only working parent struggling.

### ■ Plan what you’re going to say.

Before you initiate a conversation, think about your desired outcome. Be specific with your requests, such as a modified schedule, more flexibility or the ability to work remotely.

### ■ Find solutions for everyone.

Consider out-of-the-box solutions that not only benefit you, but your employer and co-workers as well. For example, shift swapping may be an option in industries such as health care, retail or manufacturing. Can you trade shifts with a co-worker or make up work on weekends?

### ■ Stay positive and professional.

It can be difficult to communicate that you’re struggling. Keep the conversation professional and productive, and don’t take it personally. Include specific details of your situation, suggested solutions and milestones for accountability.