

# extending the dialogue: life cycle benefits at work embracing elder care

Alzheimer's disease is a national health epidemic that cannot be ignored – particularly in the workplace, where an increasing number of employees are balancing career responsibilities with the challenges of caring for a loved one with the disease. The Society of Human Resources Management cites the significant effect this situation has on employees, calling elder care “the silent productivity killer.”

*The Alzheimer's Association invites you to use your voice to embrace change and extend life cycle benefits through elder care.*

Many organizations openly discuss the other stages of an employee's life cycle needs – including child care, personal health, wellness and saving for retirement – yet Alzheimer's and elder care remain largely unmentioned. As the baby boomer generation reaches the age of 65, the effects of this aging population will ripple throughout the workplace. An increased number of baby boomers will be forced to balance work and caregiving, and some will require care themselves. In addition, a growing number of employees from the sandwich generation will juggle caring for a child while also caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are leading cost drivers for both businesses and families. American businesses spend \$61 billion a year in expenses directly associated with care and caregiving.<sup>2</sup>

## *Why It Matters*

- For employed caregivers of people with Alzheimer's, 70 percent of men and 61 percent of women reported having to go in to work late, leave early or take time off due to caregiving demands.<sup>4</sup>
- 69.6 percent of companies offer EAP elder care counseling with less than 10 percent of the workforce utilizing the service.<sup>3</sup>
- \$36.5 billion in costs to businesses, including lost productivity, related to employees providing care for individuals with Alzheimer's or other dementias.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 61 percent<sup>4</sup> of family and other unpaid Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers rate the emotional stress of caregiving as high or very high.

*Visit [alz.org/championsatwork](http://alz.org/championsatwork) to use the Elder Care Calculator to assess productivity costs in your workplace.*

*It's time to embrace elder care as part of a conversation about life cycle benefits for your employees. Here are three simple steps.*

**1** *Encourage all employees to use the elder care resources already available to them through your company or in your community.*

- ✓ Highlight EAP services already available that help with caregiving and elder care.
- ✓ Invite a guest speaker or elder care counselor to your next employee health and wellness education event.
- ✓ Include a Alzheimer's support group in your on-site activities.

Find an Alzheimer's Association chapter near you. Your local chapter can connect employees with resources in your community.  
[alz.org](http://alz.org)

**2** *Participate in and encourage open discussion about the challenges of elder care – peer to peer, with managers, and with corporate leadership.*

- ✓ Encourage employees to have an open dialogue with their peers. Sharing a personal story provides an opportunity to share resources and reduce stress.
- ✓ Foster an environment where co-workers are open about elder care and are willing to cover work responsibilities when an emergency arises.
- ✓ Add education topics about the 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's and caregiver stress to enhance employee awareness about the stages of the disease and resources available.
- ✓ Educate company leaders and managers about the financial impact of Alzheimer's and dementia on employees.

The Alzheimer's Association Alzheimer's Early Detection Alliance (AEDA) is a group of more than 900 organizations educating their employees about Alzheimer's disease. Enroll now to receive free access to educational tools and demonstrate your commitment.  
[alz.org/AEDA](http://alz.org/AEDA)

**3** *Embrace flexibility at work for those providing elder care.*

- ✓ Extend the same options to those who have elder care responsibilities as you do to those who have child care obligations – and make it well known in your workplace.
- ✓ Discuss ways to balance career and elder care responsibilities.
- ✓ Examine your organization's benefits to make sure they complement your employees' needs as they relate to elder care.

Learn how human resources professionals can introduce high-impact, low-cost elder care benefit programs into your workplace.  
[alz.org/corporateinitiatives](http://alz.org/corporateinitiatives)

1 *Caregiving in the U.S.: a focused look at those caring for someone age 50 or older. Executive summary.* (2009) National Alliance for Caregiving: Bethesda, MD; AARP: Washington, DC. <http://www.caregiving.org/data/FINALRegularExSum50plus.pdf>. Accessed February 24, 2010.

2 *Alzheimer's Disease: The Costs to U.S. Businesses in 2002.* (2002) Koppel, R., Alzheimer's Association: Washington, DC. Available at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org), search "Alzheimer's Disease: The Costs to U.S. Businesses in 2002."

3 Dembe, A.E.; Dugan, E.; Mutschler, P.; et al. (2008) Employer perceptions of elder care assistance programs. *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*. Vol. 23(4), p. 359-79.

4 *Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures.* (2011) Alzheimer's Association National Office: Chicago, IL; Alzheimer's Association Advocacy: Washington, DC. <http://www.alz.org/facts>