

The Workplace and Alzheimer's Disease

Q: Why should my company be concerned about Alzheimer's disease?

A: Alzheimer's disease poses significant challenges for the business community.

Q: How does this happen? None of my employees have Alzheimer's disease.

A: A Gallup poll commissioned by the Alzheimer's Association found that 1 in 10 Americans said that they had a family member with Alzheimer's disease. Family and friends provide almost 75% of the care for people with Alzheimer's disease who live at home. Like other caregivers, the majority of Alzheimer's caregivers (57%) work full or part time.

Q: How can Alzheimer's disease affect my company's bottom line?

A: Often, employee's responsibilities at work are adversely affected by the demands of caregiving resulting in lost productivity, absenteeism, and worker replacement. Combined with the business share of health and long-term care expenditures, Alzheimer's disease costs American businesses more than \$61 billion annually.

A 2004 report by the Alzheimer's Association and National Alliance for Caregiving revealed that Alzheimer's caregivers expend time, energy, and emotional and financial resources to meet caregiving demands.

- 66% reported going in late, leaving early, or taking time off during the day to provide care.
- 41% of Alzheimer's caregivers rated their stress as a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being "very emotionally stressful" and 1 being "not at all stressful."
- 18% took a leave of absence.
- 18% reported that caregiving has made their health worse.
- 13% went from working full time to part time.
- 8% gave up work entirely.
- 8% turned down a promotion.
- 7% lost job benefits.
- 6% chose early retirement.

Q: I had no idea that Alzheimer's disease could affect us this way. How could I not have noticed?

A: Many caregivers don't talk about their problems at work for fear they will lose their jobs. As a result, you may not be aware of the reasons for their absences, tardiness, interruptions, etc. They will talk about caregiving stresses and difficulties only in a safe atmosphere.

Q: What can I do to help my company deal with the effects of Alzheimer's disease?

A: There are a number of things you can do to stem your losses and create a more supportive environment.

- Listen to your employee's concerns and let them know you care.
- Structure your company policies to allow flex time for caregiver employees.
- Create a program that allows employees to donate some of their vacation time to caregiver employees.
- Provide information about Alzheimer's disease through company emails or an employee newsletter.
- Host Alzheimer's Association Workplace Education Programs.
- Ensure that your EAP has tools to assist caregiver employees and refers those in need of assistance and support to the Alzheimer's Association toll-free 24/7 **Helpline (1-800-272-3900)**.
- Encourage caregiver employees to join an Alzheimer's Association support group.
- Form a company team to participate in the Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk®.

Statistical sources:

- 1) "Families Care: Alzheimer's Caregiving in the United States in 2004", © 2004 Alzheimer's Association and National Alliance for Caregiving
- 2) Fact Sheet: Alzheimer's Disease Statistics, © 2004 Alzheimer's Association