

Empowering Working Moms

02

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U.S. Breastfeeding Committee

04

ALLYSON FELIX

The Olympic legend and entrepreneur discusses the importance of integrating family life into workplace culture

Read more on Page 06

"Empathetic benefits aren't just important for 'sandwich' moms and dads — they're an absolute lifeline."

Marcy Klipfel, Chief Engagement Officer,
Businessolver



Breastfeeding Is a Public Health Imperative — and So Is Workplace Support

Pregnant and lactating individuals have the right to fair treatment and reasonable accommodations in the workplace.

Federal legislation, including the recent PUMP for Nursing Mothers Act, offers protections for breastfeeding employees. Despite this legislative progress, urgent challenges remain; lack of awareness, inconsistent enforcement, and fear of retaliation prevent too many families from benefiting fully.

This matters because human milk is a powerful, species-specific food that protects both infant and maternal health. All major medical authorities recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. Without adequate time and space to pump, many postpartum workers have to stop feeding their babies human milk sooner than planned, especially impacting those in low-wage jobs.

“August is National Breastfeeding Month, a time when the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) celebrates the progress we’ve made so far, and shines a light on the opportunities that lie ahead, especially increasing access to breastfeeding support and human milk for families from marginalized communities whose needs are often left out of healthcare policy,” said Jennifer Day, the executive director of the USBC. “We’re thrilled to celebrate the efforts of all of our partners working to expand access to human milk across the country, during National Breastfeeding Month, and beyond!”

Written by **U.S. Breastfeeding Committee (USBC)**

What Having It All Actually Looks Like

Working moms: You *can* have it all — but only if you define what that means and take the lead in building your life around it. Don’t wait for the perfect boss, benefits, or company policy. Start now.



WRITTEN BY
Tina Beaty
Chief Brand &
Marketing Officer,
SHRM

The idea of “having it all” is often framed as either impossible or unsustainable. But the real challenge isn’t choosing between work and life; it’s redefining success and building a shared understanding of flexibility and integration between employee and employer to make success possible.

Having it all doesn’t mean having it all at once; this is why the concept of work/life balance is flawed. Balance implies everything is equal. You can’t be 50% a worker and 50% a mom. Some hours must be 100% working and others 100% focused on the kids. Likewise, having it all isn’t about juggling calls while parenting. Go hour by hour. The goal is to collectively achieve the career you want while being a present, engaged mom.

A two-way street

SHRM data shows 56% of working caregivers say they lack consistent support for caregiving duties for children. The responsibility to create an environment where working parents thrive doesn’t fall on just one side — it’s a partnership. For employers, this means providing the systems, policies, and culture to make work manageable.

But working moms’ success should not wait for perfect support. Build the environment where you thrive — others can catch up. It starts with self-reflection: What are my non-negotiables? What am I willing to flex, and what

must remain fixed? How am I willing to work harder and at different times to maximize flexibility?

Prioritization is your superpower. Choose what matters — like never missing a Wednesday night Little League game — and build everything else around it. That’s not compromise. That’s control. That becomes an absolute, and the rest of your schedule works around it. But then, block out non-negotiable work time. Flexibility isn’t always life carving into work; often, work needs to carve into life. Setting boundaries clearly is the difference between struggling to balance two roles and true work/life integration.

Every working parent’s “all” looks different. And that’s the point. We need to move away from broad assumptions and build systems for individualized support. We need case-by-case solutions that honor both performance and personal priorities. This could look like 1:1 conversations, calendar adjustments, and team norms that reassure employees they can be honest about their needs as long as they’re winning at work, too. Real progress happens when organizations and individuals come together with honesty and mutual respect. It’s not about perfection, it’s about partnership.

Yes, working parents *can* have it all. With clarity, conversation, and shared accountability. You don’t need to wait for a flexible workplace to have a fulfilling life. Define your “all” — then own it.



Melanie Samuels (left) and Melissa Coulier | Photo courtesy of Live Well Lead Well

Redefining Balance: How Working Moms Can Prioritize Well-Being

Melissa Coulier and Melanie Samuels, co-founders of Live Well Lead Well, share strategies to help mothers release guilt, embrace flexibility, and integrate self-care into their lives.

What are the most common challenges you see mothers facing today when it comes to balancing their personal well-being with professional responsibilities?

Melissa Coulier: The most common challenge we see mothers facing today is the guilt attached to the idea of balancing work and well-being. In fact, the pressure is rooted in the word itself. “Balance” often implies a romanticized state that’s ultimately unattainable, and the weight of trying to achieve it can lead to persistent guilt. For many women, it never feels like enough at work, at home, or anywhere in between. The truth is, every mother’s reality is different depending on the season of her life, her support system, and her personal and professional responsibilities. “Balance” for one mother may be completely different for another, and that’s more than okay. It’s actually what allows women to thrive. We all bring something different to the table.

In your experience, what are some underestimated barriers that prevent working mothers from prioritizing their own health and self-care?

MC: One of the most underestimated barriers is the all-or-nothing mindset around wellness. The wellness industry

is often sold as a glamorized aesthetic involving expensive workout gear, elaborate routines, and restrictive diets. In our experience, we’ve found this perfectionist approach makes women feel paralyzed.

Melanie Samuels: We remind women that health doesn’t require heroics. It starts with small, consistent wins: a five-minute walk, one nourishing meal, a deep breath before a meeting. When we reframe self-care as a daily investment, not an obligation, it becomes not only sustainable but enjoyable.

If you could change one thing in the workplace to better support the well-being of working mothers, what would it be and why?

MS: One of the most impactful ways we can support working mothers is by ensuring access to affordable, reliable, and safe childcare. For many women, building a career often means stepping away from the network of family or community support that once helped share the load. Since it’s wired into a mother’s brain chemistry to think about her children even when they’re not physically present, creating conditions that provide true peace of mind is so important. Knowing your child is in safe hands can offer more mental freedom to be present at work.

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Lactation Space: Why It’s Important, Now More Than Ever

Nessel is making PUMP Act compliance effortless.

Of all the ways to support women in the workplace, few have impacts that are as meaningful and measurable as providing a dedicated lactation room for new mothers.

With the 2022 passage of the PUMP Act, employers with over 50 employees are now legally required to provide a private lactation space. While creating a lactation room is now mandated, it also offers significant cost savings by reducing attrition and absenteeism.

Studies show that 43% of women leave their jobs after returning from maternity leave. This isn’t just a statistic — it’s a costly loss of talent, experience, and leadership potential. The good news? Solutions don’t have to be complicated or expensive.

Companies like Nessel make it easy to create the perfect lactation space, offering:

- lactation pods
- lactation stations
- ergonomic pumping chairs

These solutions avoid construction and instantly transform any space into a clean and comfortable lactation space. Ideal lactation rooms are lockable and include a refrigerator, sink, outlet, desk, and pumping chair.

Investing in lactation space goes beyond compliance. It’s a powerful commitment to establishing a culture where women are respected, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Written by **Nessel**



Learn more about Nessel lactation space solutions at www.nessel.com

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Photo courtesy of Nessel



The Silent Caregiver Crisis: 56% of Sandwich Moms May Quit. Here's How to Keep Them

I keep snacks in the car. I covet sleep. Grocery delivery is my love language. And I feel like my to-do list will outlive me.

I'm not unique — I'm one of 24 million working moms in America just trying to make it all work. But as part of the "sandwich" generation, I'm not only managing my daughters' busy teenage schedules but also caring for aging parents — and, without a doubt, it takes a mental and physical toll. Some days I'm crushing it. Other days I'm lucky if I eat lunch by 3 p.m.

For working moms, career aspirations often take a backseat to the daily reality of managing life, and for other moms my age, the juggle is amplified: navigating the healthcare system for loved ones — insurance, prescriptions, appointments, advocacy — it's another invisible full-time job.

It's no wonder that 56% of "sandwich moms" say they're considering leaving their employer in the next six months, according to Businessolver's 2025 State of Workplace Empathy report.

But it's not just sandwich moms who have a hard time juggling it all: 65% of Gen X and Millennial sandwich dads say they're likely to leave their employer, too, compared to 41% of non-caregivers of the same generations. In total, sandwich generation caregivers are 1.5 times more likely to change

jobs compared to non-caregivers.

Why empathy is key to retaining your caregiver employees

With Millennials and Gen X representing the majority of both caregivers and the U.S. workforce, addressing their needs is a business imperative companies can't afford to ignore — especially with many in the prime of their careers. To attract and retain this top talent, employers must look to benefits and policies that rank highly among this group and are perceived as empathetic.

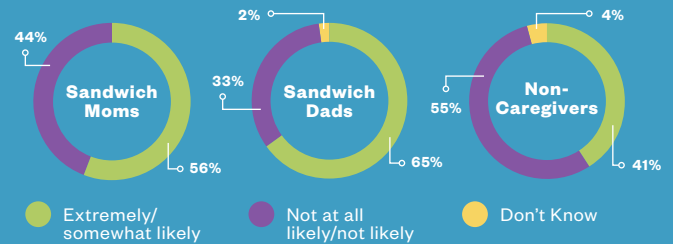
Our 2025 Empathy study found that employees who perceive their workplace as unempathetic are 1.5 times more likely to leave — costing U.S. companies an estimated \$180 billion in attrition. These workers also report three times more toxicity and 1.3 times higher mental health struggles, driving up absenteeism and lowering productivity.

Solving the silent caregiver epidemic with empathetic benefits

The silent strain of caregiving is pushing sandwich generation employees — especially women — to the brink. Though

Sandwich caregivers are 1.5X more likely to quit than non-caregivers

How likely are you to consider changing jobs in the next 6 months?



Sandwich caregivers are defined as Gen X and Millennials who are both a parent and a caregiver to someone over 18

family-focused benefits exist, many focus on growing families (dependent care flexible spending accounts, fertility benefits, etc.). Our data reveals 70% of caregivers would consider changing their job for better mental health support compared with 54% of non-caregivers. And, according to the University of Phoenix, 66% say current benefits fail to meet their caregiving demands. For sandwich moms, employer financial support is even more crucial: 55% of sandwich moms report living in a single-income household with 52% of their paychecks going to caregiving costs.

It's time for employers to lead with empathy, creating support

systems that protect retention, mental health, and career growth.

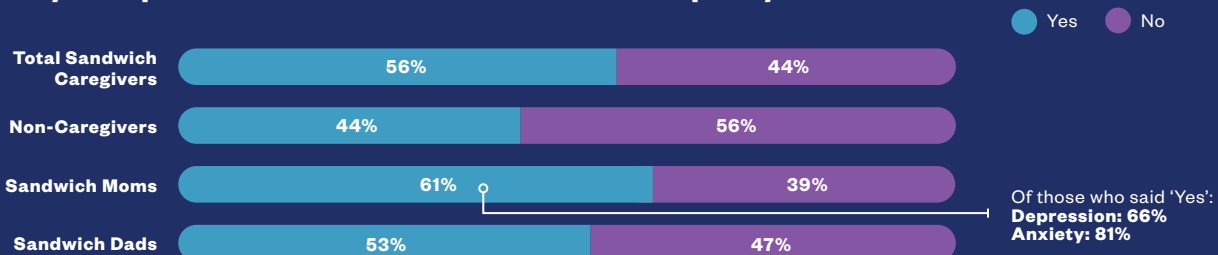
Here are 4 ways to support your "sandwich" moms and caregivers:

1. Financial well-being:

Businessolver's 2025 Benefits Insights Report showed 56% of women, compared to 41% of men, would feel panicked about a \$6,000 unexpected expense. And only 6% of women say they're prepared for such a large out-of-pocket expense.

What employers can do: Pay transparency and equity are key to helping women and caregivers make ends meet, alongside career

Have you experienced a mental health issue in the past year?



coaching and advancement opportunities. Financial support programs like 401(k) plans and financial education programs are likewise especially important for women, whose savings typically lag compared to men. In fact, according to our data, only 25% of women say they're able to always save for a rainy day.

2. Workplace flexibility:

PTO is a must-have for 61% of caregivers, but flexibility around when and where they work also ranks highly: 51% of caregivers would be willing to take a pay cut to work remotely. Of those that already work in a remote or hybrid capacity, 61% would leave their job if required to work in the office full-time. But employers often overlook the connection between flexibility and mental well-being: 76% of caregivers say the option to work remotely is important for their mental well-being.

What employers can do:

Afford employees with greater autonomy over when and where they work, to whatever extent possible — from flexible hours to four-day weeks and job sharing. Flexibility isn't just about better time management; it's one of the most cost-effective benefits an employer can offer as healthcare costs skyrocket. And if flexible workplaces are not an option, consider offering a benefit that supports caregivers

by helping them offload some responsibilities to caregiving support providers such as Grayce.

3. Mental health benefits:

In total, 56% of caregivers versus 44% of non-caregivers say they've experienced a mental health issue in the past year. But when we look at the types of mental health issues, female caregivers are more likely to report higher incidences of nearly every mental health condition, with depression (66%) and anxiety (81%) the most common.

What employers can do:

Improve awareness for employer-sponsored mental health benefits like employee assistance programs, which are vastly underutilized. Leaders and direct managers play important roles in creating safe spaces and transparent dialogue to encourage benefits usage and dispel mental health stigma, which remains a significant barrier to usage.

4. Benefits access and awareness:

Navigating benefits and the healthcare system is hard enough for yourself — now layer on the complexities of Medicare for aging parents. While our data shows 86% of employees are confused about their benefits, they're also willing to adopt technology that helps them choose and use their benefits: 64% use decision support at enrollment when it's available,

driving 3 times more lift in voluntary benefits enrollment that supports the financial wellness caregivers need.

What employers can do:

Implement decision support and AI-enabled technology that drives both a better benefits experience and cost-savings. Companies that have implemented AI-enabled self-service tools like Businessolver's virtual assistant, cognitive search, and dependent verification services save on average \$3 million per year.

Empathetic benefits aren't just important for sandwich generation moms and dads — they're an absolute lifeline. Organizations have much to risk by not taking care of this top talent. But supporting them with empathy-driven policies pays dividends. Take care of them, and they'll take care of your customers and bottom line in return.



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To read Businessolver's 2025 State of Workplace Empathy report, visit businessolver.com/workplace-empathy



Top 10 Benefits Caregiver Employees Say Are Empathetic

Sandwich caregivers are more likely to say the following benefits demonstrate employer empathy than non-caregivers.



Paid Maternity Leave



Paid Time Off (PTO)



Flexible Work Hours



Flexible Work Location (remote work)



Wellness Days



Paid Paternity Leave



Extended Mental Health Benefits



Core Benefits (medical, dental, vision, life)

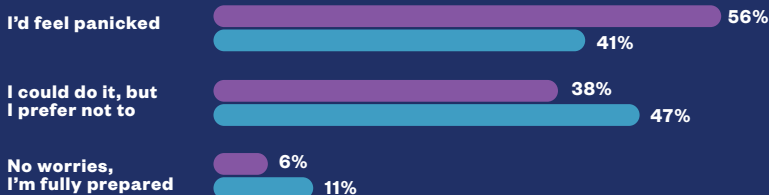


Employer Financial Contributions (401k, HSA, FSA, etc.)



Family Benefits (paid after school programs, daycare)

How would you feel about facing a \$6,000 emergency room bill?



Self-Reported Gender

- Female
- Male

Flexible Work: The Key to Supporting Working Moms

Rae Shanahan, chief strategy officer at Businessolver, shares why flexible work policies and caregiver support programs are essential for empowering working parents.



INTERVIEW WITH
Rae Shanahan
Chief Strategy Officer,
Businessolver

What role do flexible work policies play in supporting working moms?

Flexible work hours give caregivers (and all employees) the freedom to balance their work, life, and caregiving responsibilities in a structure that works best for them. Flexibility is one of the cheapest and most cost-effective benefits an employer can offer. This isn't just about making time for daycare, school, or appointment drop-offs; it's about giving employees real autonomy to take care of work, family, and their own well-being. If flexible work hours truly aren't an option, consider what other benefits and policies you can put in place to help offset caregiving responsibilities, like subsidized daycare.

How can companies create a more inclusive and supportive culture for parents, particularly mothers returning from parental leave?

Inclusion and support are rooted in empathy. At Businessolver, we offer mental health and caregiver support programs and maintain a remote workplace and flexible work hours to help parents transition back into their careers with less friction. We also offer parent support groups where parents can connect and share resources, experiences, and advice. Above all, we work hard to maintain a culture where everyone feels fully supported both in their careers and their personal lives.

Allyson Felix on Building Supportive, Family- Friendly Workplaces

Olympic legend and entrepreneur Allyson Felix discusses the importance of flexibility, empathy, and culture for supporting working mothers in the modern workplace.



Allyson Felix | Photo
by Andre Wagner

How do you think employers can better support working mothers?

I think it really starts with creating an environment where mothers don't feel like they have to choose. I think it's about getting outside of the traditional model and being more flexible, whether that's offering remote work options or on-site childcare. How can we show up and support them so they can do the work they love?

What policies have been most helpful to you as a working mom building a business?

For me, it really has been the flexibility to be in leadership and to normalize being a parent, whether that is stepping out to breastfeed my son, traveling with my kids, or leaving early to be at my daughter's baseball game. I'm still doing all the work, but I'm integrating family life as well. I think we need more of that, where women don't feel penalized for having families, but rather feel like we can embrace it.

How has motherhood shaped your leadership style?

Early in my career, I had friends who had children, and I just didn't understand

what they were going through. Having gone through it multiple times now, I can be more intentional, have more empathy, and lead with greater awareness. I don't want anyone to feel like they have to hide their parenthood or feel like it's a liability; it adds to the richness of the work we're doing.

Can you share a little bit about your own maternal health experience and why you've done such amazing advocacy work in this space?

I gave birth to my daughter at 32 weeks. I had what I thought was a healthy pregnancy. I was still competing, training, and felt strong, but at 32 weeks, I was diagnosed with a severe case of preeclampsia and gave birth via emergency C-section. It shook up my world. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I had heard statistics about women of color and giving birth, but I had no up-close experience. I had taken my health for granted and never imagined myself in that situation.

Learning how preventable so much of it is, that moved me. When we made it out of the hospital and brought our daughter home, I thought, "How can we be part of the solution?"

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Federal Paid Family and Medical Leave

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