

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES OF CARE

by George Karavattuveetil, Psyched LLC

Organizational culture can be defined as the sum total of expectations, rituals and values that integrate employee relationships, behaviors and decisions. But what constitutes a real culture of care? For our purpose, a culture of care is defined as one where employees feel that they are truly cared for by their organization. That their respective organizations understand the challenges they face and have implemented policies, practices and supportive resources to effectively respond to employee needs. Employees facing family caregiving challenges are especially vulnerable in cultures where care may not be a visible and overtly addressed priority. The results of caregiving challenges may also be evident to managers of employee family caregivers. They must deal with unplanned absences, unintentional work disruptions and team frustrations. Unfortunately, organizations and executive leadership teams are many times less aware of family caregiving impact and therefore ill prepared to most effectively support this growing population.

By the numbers: 70% of full-time workers are impacted by caregiving. 80% of working caregivers say it impacts their productivity. 25% of caregivers are millennials. 52% of caregivers provide care to more than one person. On average, caregivers spend 32 hours per week performing care responsibilities. How is caregiving impacting your employees and your organization?

So, how do you begin creating a culture of care? First, create awareness of the growing societal challenge. Educate leadership and the larger employee population of the facts. Second, collect data. Confirm the internal need and gain acceptance of the importance. Finally, take action. Get organizational leaders actively involved in the communication of their own caregiving journey. This is critical to show that it's okay for employees to share their own experience and that they're not alone. Family caregivers, and even more so those that are employees, find it difficult to identify themselves as the caregivers they are. Having organizational leaders share their own family caregiving stories will go a long way to improve the chances of caregiver self-identification. Leadership sharing should include executives as well as first line managers as it's the first line managers most likely to see the effects of family caregiving within their departmental teams.

Creating a culture of care should also include conversations to understand what benefits and specific policies and practices would be most valuable to employee family caregivers. What's of greatest importance to employees and how does it impact their ability to address their caregiving challenges. Is it more flexible work scheduling? Or, a better understanding of family medical leave and how it can be appropriately applied in their specific situation? Caring cultures will have ongoing conversations with employees to stay up to date with their continuously changing needs.



Clearly, the creation and maintenance of a caring culture requires energy and financial resources. However, the return on investment is tremendous! Whether we're talking employee engagement, physical, intellectual and emotional well-being, or team member productivity, cultures of care are very much worth the time and money. Get Psyched about caring cultures!