



# WORKING PARENTS UNDERWATER

IT'S NEVER BEEN HARDER TO WORK AND RAISE CHILDREN.  
THE RIPPLES COULD BE WITH EMPLOYERS FOR YEARS.



## WORK AND LIFE UPENDED

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Working while parenting has always been precarious. Then the pandemic hit, and **whatever little structure there was came tumbling down.**

Suddenly, the working parent struggle was laid bare, news articles and desperate comment threads detailing parents in meetings while entertaining toddlers; working while supervising restless grade schoolers and virtual lessons; burning out worrying all if of this will go on forever.

One parent summed it up pointedly: "I'm drowning."<sup>1</sup>

## A SNOWBALLING **BUSINESS ISSUE**

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Far from just a personal problem, business experts<sup>2</sup> called it an emerging economic crisis. A whole middle segment of the workforce may be disappearing – the third of the nation's employees<sup>3</sup> who are caring for children; the Millennials who delayed families<sup>4</sup> until they were firmly established in careers; the mid-career workers who were expected to become tomorrow's leaders.

# 1/3

of families have had one parent leave the workforce<sup>5</sup>

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# 1-in-5

don't know whether they'll be able to come back<sup>6</sup>

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# 60%

say caregiving duties stand in their way<sup>7</sup>

# A UNIVERSAL **CHALLENGE**

## THE FALLOUT CROSSES EVERY SPECIALTY

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### **FRONTLINES**

For those who have to work on site – and a third of frontlines are parents – **no child care means no work.**<sup>8</sup>

### **CORPORATE EMPLOYEES**

People working remotely aren't faring much better. If the endless anecdotes of children showing up in virtual meetings and presentations proved anything, it's that child care and WFH is not an either/or proposition.



## WORKING MOTHERS

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It's been especially disastrous for working mothers – a whole generation of professional women watching hard-won accomplishments evaporate and losing precious time they'll never get back.<sup>9</sup>

▶ **11.3 million:**

number of women's jobs lost in a single month, wiping out all their gains of the past decade<sup>10</sup>

"I'm scared to lose my position," one mother told CNBC, echoing the sentiment of parents everywhere, "but at the same time cannot just leave my daughter."<sup>11</sup>



## NO RELIEF FOR PARENTS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN

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And it's not just parents of young children at risk. "American **parents stand to lose even more productivity,**" explained one writer, "as more school districts like Los Angeles limit how many students will return to the classroom for the upcoming school year."<sup>12</sup>

In fact, far from solving working parent problems, back-to-school will likely add new ones, with erratic education schedules (assuming there's any school at all) creating **constantly changing care needs** that experts say are often the hardest to fix.<sup>13</sup>

# THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF DIRE CARE SHORTAGES

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Yet even as the movement toward reopening workplaces rolls on, few employers have made plans.

And care shortages promise to make arrangements harder for employees to find on their own. Post-pandemic, the number of available child care spaces could shrink by as much as 50%.<sup>15</sup>

More than two-thirds – **23.5 million working parents<sup>16</sup>** – have no potential caregivers at all, putting millions of employees at risk.<sup>17</sup>

**ONLY  
32%**  
of companies have  
child care plans in place<sup>14</sup>

# DRAWING THE RESPONSE STRATEGY

The burnout and productivity risks are real. And with care options in such short supply, the race is on for employers to find answers – not just child care, but also education support – that help people work, and that take the burden off of working parents to find it.

- ▶ **In-home care options** that can handle families' concerns about safety
- ▶ **Affordable access to child care centers** with successful COVID-19 track records
- ▶ **Flexible work arrangements** to accommodate parents' increasingly erratic schedules
- ▶ **On-demand care provisions** to handle shifting school hours and gaps in regular care
- ▶ **Creative approaches** to multiple learning supports such as small group "learning pods," in-home educational instructors, and virtual tutoring and enrichment

The consensus among economists and business leaders is that these **millions of employees are indispensable**. So the help will be essential. "Working parents," wrote Brookings in one of the many unequivocal statements on the subject, "are key to COVID-19 recovery."<sup>18</sup>

# ABOUT BRIGHT HORIZONS

*Bright Horizons Family Solutions*® helps employers create healthier, higher-performing workforces by solving critical care and education needs: affordable, high quality child care in centers and in-homes; reliable nationwide back-up care to cover for disruptions in regular care schedules; and a range of learning and school supports for employees with children of all ages.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Rumaan Alam, ["I'm Drowning; I Can't Do My Job and Take Care of My Baby."](#) Slate, April 14, 2020

<sup>2</sup> Heather Long, ["The Big Factor Holding Back the U.S. Economic Recovery: Child Care."](#) The Washington Post, July 3, 2020

<sup>3</sup> Nicole Batemen, ["Working Parents are Key to COVID-19 Recovery."](#) Brookings, July 8, 2020

<sup>4</sup> ["Women in 30s Now Having More Babies than Younger Moms in US."](#) AP, May 17, 2017

<sup>5</sup> ["The Burden is Real - Immediate Action Needed to Support and Retain Working Parents."](#) Cleo, June 2020

<sup>6</sup> ["More than One-in-Five Working Parents are Unsure Whether They Will Fully Return to Work."](#) U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, July 27, 2020

<sup>7</sup> Katie Clarey, ["Caregiving Prevents Workforce Re-Entry. Study Finds."](#) HR Dive, July 31, 2020

<sup>8</sup> Hye Jin Rho, Hayley Brown, Shawn Fremstad, ["A Basic Demographic Profile of Workers in Frontline Industries."](#) April 2020

<sup>9</sup> Stephanie Ebbert, ["In One Month, Job Cuts Wipe Out Women's Gains of the Past Decade."](#) Boston Globe, May 19, 2020

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Jill Cornfield, ["Working Parents Find it's Nearly Impossible to Make Plans with Dwindling Child-Care Options."](#) CNBC, May 8, 2020

<sup>12</sup> Karen Ho, ["50 Million US Parents are Headed Toward Another Childcare Crisis."](#) Quartz, July 15, 2020

<sup>13</sup> Danna Greenberg, Jamie J. Ladge, ["How Being a Working Parent Changes as Children Grow Up."](#) Harvard Business Review, September 26, 2019

<sup>14</sup> Megan Leonhardt, ["Only 32% of Companies Returning to Work Have Plans for Employees' Child-Care Needs Even as Many Schools Postpone Reopening Full-time."](#) CNBC, July 20, 2020

<sup>15</sup> Jill Cornfield, ["Working Parents Find it's Nearly Impossible to Make Plans with Dwindling Child-Care Options."](#) CNBC, May 8, 2020

<sup>16</sup> Nicole Batemen, ["Working Parents are Key to COVID-19 Recovery."](#) Brookings, July 8, 2020

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid



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