

TOP 8 SIGNS AN EMPLOYER IS FAMILY FRIENDLY AND THE BENEFITS OFFERED BY FAMILY-FRIENDLY EMPLOYERS



It's every working parent's nightmare. You discover that an important client meeting has been scheduled for the morning of your daughter's school play. Your heart pulls you to attend the play, but your head tells you that your boss won't understand your dilemma and will expect you to keep the meeting.

The term "family-friendly workplace" has meant many things over the past few years and the types of benefits that companies are now instituting have evolved. There is a wide range of company benefits, that when packaged together, can really make a difference in a working parents life. Below is a partial list of benefits that are starting to emerge as standard corporate offerings:

1. **Schedule Flexibility:** flextime, part-time, job sharing, compressed work weeks – these are all ways to ease the schedule conflicts that parents face.
2. **Telecommuting:** whether it's an everyday arrangement, available on an as-needed basis, or somewhere in between, many employers see telecommuting as a way to provide another form of flexibility to workers.
3. **Childcare Programs:** companies are setting up on-site or off-site daycare, after-school and summer programs, as well as sick and emergency child care programs that allow parents to have one less thing to worry about in their day.
4. **Maternity/Paternity Leave Policy:** the standard 6 weeks is being stretched out to accommodate parents who want to be home with their infants, and companies are extending the benefit to dads too. It's not uncommon to find this type of leave policy extended to adoption and elder care as well.
5. **Wellness Programs:** it's no mystery that a happy, healthy employee is much more productive than a stressed-out, sick one. Companies are now providing fitness centers, yoga classes, massages, and health-oriented workshops and seminars on everything from managing stress to feng shui.
6. **Work/Life Programs:** pet care, dry cleaning, psychologists, referral services – all of these extras are designed to assist employees with everyday tasks that can add up.

So, how do you go about finding a family-friendly employer?

1. **Ask other parents who they work for and what types of benefits they offer.** Put out the word that you're looking for specific benefits and you'd be surprised how many people can help point you in the right direction.
2. **Seek out the independent reports.** The Working Mother's Best Companies For Working Moms Report is a widely known publication that can be found [here](#).
3. **Contact your local chapter of the Society of Human Resource Management and ask for a list of family-friendly employers in your area.**
4. **Scrutinize the workplace once you've landed an interview. Talk to other employees if you can. Take note of the environment.** Do you see kids' artwork and photos of families around the workspaces, which might indicate a place where other parents work? Check out the parking lot in the late evening and see how many workers stick around after standard hours.
5. **Look for companies that employ 1000 or more people, as larger companies are more likely to provide family-oriented benefits.**
6. **Pinpoint companies where women fill top executive positions.** A Families and Work Institute study revealed that 82% of companies with women in half or more of their top executive positions provide traditional flextime, compared with 56% of companies with no women in top positions. The study also found that six times as many companies with women in half or more of their top executive positions provide on-site (or near-site) daycare as those with no women in top management.
7. **Another indicator to look for is the percentage of women in the company's workforce, as there is a correlation that when women constitute a larger proportion of the workforce, companies are more likely to provide a number of family-oriented benefits.**
8. **Target the finance, insurance, or real estate industries, as studies have shown that these employers stand out as the most generous in benefit areas, while the wholesale and retail trades emerge as least generous.**

One key piece to making it all work: manager buy-in. The benefits may all be available, but if your supervisor isn't on board it's time to look elsewhere.