The development of the contents of these training slides was supported by funding from the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research, United States Department of Education, and the Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services (NIDRR grants H133B040038, H1338090019, and H133B140039). These slides were prepared for The Technical Assistance Network for Children’s Behavioral Health under contract between the University of Maryland and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Contract #HHSS280201300002C). However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.
Balancing Work & Family Responsibilities
Agenda

• Introductions
• Use of the manual
• Why we are here
• Knowledge building
• Skill building
• Action plan development
Balancing Work & Family Responsibilities

As Parent Support Providers, you have walked in the shoes of employed parents of children with disabilities.
Learning Objectives

By the end of this session you will be able to:

1) Identify the prevalence of children/youth with disabilities, and the challenges faced by the parents who care for them.

2) Identify federal policies and employment strategies that may increase work-life integration of employees.

3) Recognize and discuss major organizational dilemmas facing HR (and supervisors) when employed parents of children/youth ask for flexibility.

4) Describe and carry out planning and communication strategies that employed parents of children/youth with disabilities can use to access workplace support.
• Terms used: disabilities, special needs, special health care needs.
• Various categories: e.g., physical, mental health, developmental.
• Chronic conditions with acute episodes.
• Rates of occurrence vary by definition used for data collection.
• Rates of employees parenting children/youth with disabilities.
23% of all households have children/youth with special health care needs.
Prevalence

Public health crisis: only 1 in 5 children/youth receive needed mental health care.
Prevalence

9% of employees are parents of children/youth with disabilities.
• Module 1: Definition/Terminology

- Use terms relating to disability appropriately, and with “person first” language.
- Learn more about the chronic/acute presentation of a specific disability that affects children/youth, e.g., autism, asthma.
- Distribute information on prevalence rates to other parents and employers.
Which term is used for conditions of children/youth who qualify for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

A. Chronic illness
B. Acute illness
C. Special needs
D. Medical impairment
Which term is used for conditions of children/youth who qualify for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

A. Chronic illness  
B. Acute illness  
C. Special needs  
D. Medical impairment
Which of the following is an example of the use of “person first” language?

A. Bipolar adolescent
B. Boy with asthma
C. Diabetic girl
D. Paraplegic
Which of the following is an example of the use of “person first” language?

A. Bipolar adolescent

B. Boy with asthma

C. Diabetic girl

D. Paraplegic
Exceptional Caregiving Responsibilities

- Tasks and activities more complex & extensive than typical caregiving.
- Requires coordination with many community-based resources.
- Can lead to caregiver strain affecting health & well-being of employee.
## Exceptional Caregiving Responsibilities
(Roundtree and Lynch, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caring for a child/youth with typical development</th>
<th>Caring for a child/youth with special needs/disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant care that diminishes</td>
<td>Constant care that often escalates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary input of time and energy</td>
<td>Extraordinary input of time and energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier as time goes by</td>
<td>Often harder as time goes by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few interruptions are emergency-driven</td>
<td>Many interruptions are emergency-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child/youth grows increasingly independent</td>
<td>Child/youth may grow increasingly dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires some lifestyle adjustments</td>
<td>Requires numerous lifestyle adjustments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges and successes are easily shared</td>
<td>Challenges are rarely shared; successes are fewer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parents of children/youth with disabilities engage in care tasks that are more complex and extensive than other parents.

Exceptional caregiving requires coordination with multiple community-based supports.

Parents involved in exceptional caregiving may experience caregiver strain which can have negative health effects.
Employee Work-Life Integration Challenges

- Child care
- Managing child/youth care appointments and crises
- Building a career/upward job mobility
- Experiencing courtesy stigmatization
- Disclosure decisions about child/youth disability
23.8% of U. S. families raising a child with special health care needs have a member who quit or reduced hours because of exceptional care responsibilities.
Children with mental health problems are 20 times more likely to be dismissed from child care than typically developing children.
I would get calls from the day care. ‘I quit. I can’t handle him’. I was like, ‘I have two more hours. Could you just hold on for two more hours?’

If I don’t keep him on medication and keep the check-ups regular and stuff, things will get progressively worse. That will be the point where it is a complete necessity. I can’t be at work for a week.

It is not a result of poor parenting or character deficits, or that you feed your kid too much of this food...you don’t need people’s judgment on you...suddenly there’s something wrong with you because you have a child with a diagnosis.
Which of the following is **generally true** for parents who are caring for children with disabilities but **not true** for parents whose children are developing typically?

A. Requires lifestyle adjustment.
B. Challenges and successes are shared with co-workers.
C. Few work-day interruptions are emergency driven
D. As children become older, parenting demands become more intense and time consuming.
Which of the following is generally true for parents who are caring for children with disabilities but not true for parents whose children are developing typically?

A. Requires lifestyle adjustment.
B. Challenges and successes are shared with co-workers.
C. Few work-day interruptions are emergency driven.

D. As children become older, parenting demands become more intense and time consuming.
Which statement best describes child care for children with disabilities?

A. Child care centers are required to enroll all children with disabilities.

B. Child care is often provided by parents scheduling work shifts that do not overlap.

C. Parents of children with disabilities report their children’s child care is satisfactory and of high quality.

D. Affordable child care is easy to find for children with disabilities.
Which statement best describes child care for children with disabilities?

A. Child care centers are required to enroll all children with disabilities.

B. **Child care is often provided by parents scheduling work shifts that do not overlap.**

C. Parents of children with disabilities report their children’s child care is satisfactory and of high quality.

D. Affordable child care is easy to find for children with disabilities.
Checkpoint: What Can I Do?

- **Module 2: Exceptional Caregiving Responsibilities**
  - Identify community-based resources for employed parents with ECRs; compile resource file.
  - Assist parents as they make long-term career decisions.

- **Module 3: WL Integration Challenges**
  - Listen for comments that reflect stigmatization & courtesy stigmatization; educate as needed.
  - With employed parents review their company’s policies and practices regarding time-off for child’s doctor appointments and handling crises.
Key Policies and Legal Issues

- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).
- American with Disabilities Act (ADA), Association Provision.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Family Responsibilities Discrimination.
Which one of the following supports is ensured by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

A. Salary paid to an employee while taking time off to care for her child who has cancer.
B. Job protection for a grandmother who takes FMLA to care for a granddaughter experiencing a mental health crisis.
C. Guaranteed right to return to the same, or an equivalent position after the conclusion of a father’s leave to care for his son with an acute health crisis.
D. Job protection for a part-time worker who is caring for a child who is recovering from an accident.
Which one of the following supports is ensured by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)?

A. Salary paid to an employee while taking time off to care for her child who has cancer.

B. Job protection for a grandmother who takes FMLA to care for a granddaughter experiencing a mental health crisis.

C. Guaranteed right to return to the same, or an equivalent position after the conclusion of a father’s leave to care for his son with an acute health crisis.

D. Job protection for a part-time worker who is caring for a child who is recovering from an accident.
Parent Story: Charlie

• Charlie
  – 10 year employee.
  – FT Administrative Assistant.
  – Supervisor expressed concerns to him about his frequent family-related phone calls, leaving the office to care for daughter with asthma. His wife cannot shift her work schedule or take calls.
  – Wants to request time off to stabilize daughter’s health, move to PT.

• What major work-life integration challenges does Charlie face?
• What are some of the federal policies that might apply when talking with Charlie about his request?
Employment-based Strategies and Supports

- Find a family-friendly workplace.
- Learn about rights and relevant benefits.
- Structure work to maximize flexibility.
- Make a disclosure plan.
- Negotiate reciprocity.
The strategy that I now have is to find an employer who is family-friendly. I work for an airline and it provides me with great flexibility. I am able to trade shifts with other people to accommodate my needs.

If I have a headache or I am sick, I just write it off as sick time, but if it is something wrong with my child, then I write it down as FMLA. It is nice because I don’t have to use the whole 12 weeks a year, but I probably use at least half. To me, it is a safeguard.
## Possible Outcomes of Disclosure Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disclosure</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access formal supports</td>
<td>Courtesy stigmatization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible work arrangements</td>
<td>Equity concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase informal supports</td>
<td>Performance scrutiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educate others</td>
<td>Co-worker resentment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealment</td>
<td>Avoid courtesy stigmatization</td>
<td>Diminished access to formal supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid equity concerns</td>
<td>Diminished flexible work arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid performance scrutiny</td>
<td>Diminished informal support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid co-worker resentment</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Escape worries from home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain a “normal appearing” work life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding HR Professionals’ Support Dilemmas

- Balancing the work-life needs of the employed parent of child/youth with business goals.
- Having too much information vs. not enough to provide support.
- Minimizing potential litigation with maximizing flexibility and support.
If you allow one employee to do a certain flexibility on issues and then say no to another, that brings up a whole other situation of equity that you might have to speak to, or you might be breaking the work rules and whatnot. There are just tons of factors, like everything else in human resources.

It is such a litigious environment. You really have to watch your Ps and Qs because just the slightest thing can set someone off...You have to be absolutely careful every step of the way. Otherwise you are opening yourself up to an enormous potential lawsuit.
Checkpoint: What Can I Do?

- Module 5: Employment Strategies and Supports
  - Work with parents who are seeking employment to identify a family-friendly employer.
  - Discuss ways to obtain flexible work arrangements with employed parents.

- Module 6: Understanding HR Support Dilemmas
  - Review the roles and responsibilities of HR professionals with employed parents.
Accessing Workplace Support

• Identifying Resources for Support:
  – Inventory
  – Access plan

• Disclosure planning:
  – When?
  – Who?
  – What?

• Communication Strategies:
  – Speak to organizational concerns
  – Partner for solutions
  – Re-connect, re-evaluate, re-commit
Inventory of Supportive Resources
Accessing Workplace Support

- Inventory of Supportive Resources
- Disclosure Planning
Accessing Workplace Support

- Inventory of Supportive Resources
- Disclosure Planning
- Communication Strategies
Inventory of Supportive Resources

• Flexible Work Arrangements
  - Variable scheduling
  - Work from home
  - Swap with co-workers
  - Part-time options
  - Temporary work reduction
  - Handbook information on how to request, negotiate

• Leave Policies
  - Paid leave provided
  - Unpaid leave provided
  - Sick leave
  - Flexible use of leave
  - FMLA

• Time-off Policies
  - Child’s medical appts.
  - Child’s IEP or school appts.
  - Care coordination
  - Child crisis
  - Co-workers’ donated time

• Child Care
  - Onsite child care/trained
  - Subsidized R&R
  - Child care subsidies
  - Flexible spending accounts
  - Child can come to work

• Health Benefits
  - Comprehensive coverage for FT, PT
  - Wellness, dental, vision, MH
  - Choice of plans
Inventory of Supportive Resources

- **People**
  - Supportive supervisor
  - Supportive co-workers
  - Knowledgeable and supportive HR
  - Notified quickly about child emergency
  - Affinity or support groups, networks for employees w/child/youth disabilities.

- **Other**
  - Can take & make personal, child related calls
  - Workshops, seminars on children/youth with disabilities
  - Disability information on company internet

- **Your Ideas?**
Disclosure Planning

• Conversation Starters
  – Could you tell me your experiences when sharing information about your child’s disability?
  – What are your thoughts, feelings about sharing information with others at your workplace?
  – Who, if anyone, have you told that your child has (condition)?

• Disclosure Planning
  – When?
  – With whom?
  – What type of information?
Collaborative Communication

• Communication about family matters is:
  – Personal
  – Relational
  – Informational
  – Collaborative

• Three skill areas to enhance
  – Speak to organizational concerns
e.g. “Here’s how I will continue to communicate with my supervisor and co-workers if I sometimes work from home.”

  – Partner for solutions
e.g. “Here are some ways I have successfully problem-solved my work-family challenges in the past”.

  – Re-connect, re-evaluate, & re-commit
e.g. “Can we meet in two weeks to review which strategies are working and where I might need additional support?”
Parent Story: Susan

• Susan
  – 8 year employee; FT accountant
  – Referred to HR by her supervisor, Joe because of missed deadlines, negative calls from clients, and trouble at home.
  – Recently divorced, now a single parent of a son who has mental health and substance abuse difficulties
  – Discussion: how to make Susan’s work-life situation more manageable.

• *What would you suggest Susan discuss with Joe?*
• *How will you help her prepare before she meets with HR?*
• How can developing the three skill areas discussed in this Module 7 help Susan get the workplace supports she needs?
Balancing Work & Family Responsibilities:

Parent Support Provider Training

Thank You