

Reducing work-life conflict: What works? What doesn't ^[1]

Health Canada

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AVAILABILITY

- Full report in pdf ^[2]

Description:

Researchers have long been interested in understanding the strategies that individuals and families employ to cope with stressful events and circumstances. Although much has been written about coping strategies and processes, there has been a lack of integration among the researchers studying family coping, individual coping and organizational support for coping. As a result, these three fields have developed in relative isolation, despite the obvious overlap in their content. It is the intent of this report to provide a holistic picture of how strategies applied by the key stakeholders in the work&em;lfe equation&emdash;the individual, the family and the organization&emdash;help employees cope with work&em;lfe conflict. Accordingly, the key objective of this report is to identify coping strategies that are associated with lower levels of the four forms of work&em;lfe conflict: role overload, work-to-family interference, family-to-work interference and caregiver strain.

Findings include:

- Women were more likely than men to say that it was difficult for them to vary their work hours, work at home during the day, take their holidays when they wanted, interrupt their work day for personal reasons and then return, and take a paid day off work to care for a sick child or an elderly dependent. Men were more likely than women to say it was easy for them to accomplish all of these tasks.
- Less than 10% of the respondents indicated that their employer offered on-site day care (8%), child care (7%) or elder care (6%) referral services. The fact that the majority of the 100 organizations in our sample do not help their employees deal with dependent care obligations attests to the fact that many employers are managing according to the "myth of separate worlds."
- Researchers have inferred from the data that shift work may be advantageous to couples with children in that it enables them to reduce dependence on non-parental care arrangements by off-shifting child care. The Canadian National Child Care Study reported similar findings. It noted that 17% of dual-income families in Canada deliberately worked off-shifts (i.e. spouses worked different shifts from each other) for child care purposes. Almost one third of the respondents (31%) indicated that they did in fact off-shift with their partner to better manage work and family responsibilities.

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