Why Should Supervisors and Managers Support Gradual Return to Work?

Employer Benefits: Effect of Flexible Schedules on Productivity, Recruitment and Retention

The use of flexible scheduling, including Gradual Return to Work after birth/adoption, has been shown through a rich body of research to benefit organizations, managers and employees in multiple ways:

1. Enhances ability to recruit skilled employees
2. Enhances retention; decreases turnover costs
3. Reduced absenteeism
4. Reduced stress and corresponding health care costs
5. Increased profit through engagement, productivity and loyalty

Retention at UM. Using a conservative assumption that the rate of actual retirements in the next five years will equal that of the past five years, UM’s 2007 Human Capital Report projected that, across the entire Ann Arbor campus, 24% of current managers and 15% of staff would retire by 2013.

VOICES of the Staff Recommends Gradual Return to Work. In 2005, President Coleman created the VOICES of the Staff program—UM’s first campus-wide body designed to examine staff issues. Under the auspices of the VOICES Health and Wellness network group, staff began generating suggestions about workplace flexibility. One of the group’s chief recommendations was to increase awareness and use of Gradual Return to Work arrangements for staff who become new parents. Given that faculty can make such arrangements using their Modified Duties policy, the lack of a formal GRTW policy for staff hurts staff morale and retention.

Peer Organizations Offer Gradual Return to Work Options to Employees. The President’s Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues documented for UM senior leadership how flexible scheduling, including Gradual Return to Work after birth or adoption, can benefit the University’s mission to recruit and retain skilled staff. Their study notes that Gradual Return to Work policies are offered by the following peer employers, both here in Michigan and nationally.

- Borders Group
- Ford World Headquarters
- Eastern Michigan University
- Oakland Community College
- University of California - Berkeley
- University of Illinois
- University of Minnesota - Twin Cities
- Northwestern University
- Ohio State University
- University of Washington- Seattle
- University of Wisconsin – Madison

Employee Benefits: Effect of Reduced Appointment on Child and Maternal Health. As the health and wellness of our work force gains priority as part of our business plan to contain spiraling health costs, the increased use of Gradual Return to Work for new parents has multiple benefits. Medical research is finding that longer maternity leaves are beneficial for both infant and parent health. Such arrangements are good for the parent and the child, resulting in:

1. Lower stress for parent and child
2. Stronger family relationships
3. Increased ability to care for health issues
4. Decreased spread of infections at home and at work due to reduced out-of-home child care
5. Decreased economic strain due to lower child care costs
6. Inadequate supply of infant care in community makes finding suitable care difficult