Child Care is a Key Factor for Delaware's Workforce and Economy

What Can Employers Do?

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SUPPORT YOUR EMPLOYEES & ADVOCATE FOR POLICY CHANGE

In 2025, hundreds of diverse employers across Delaware shared how child care is a barrier to hiring, retention, and overall economic and business growth, with 95% of employers reporting child care issues hurt their employees—and 75% reporting it negatively impacts their business.

Support Your Employees

Understand their needs.

Ask your employees directly about their child care situations and how it impacts their work. A staff survey can help you learn whether they're struggling to find affordable care, need help during evening or weekend shifts, or face other challenges. Offering resources and altering schedules can improve staff culture and productivity.

Connect them to resources.

Point staff to AccessCare, a free service that helps families find child care providers and offers resources to help guide them in making the best choices for their family's needs.

OFFER FAMILY-FRIENDLY BENEFITS.

Dependent Care Assistance Plans (DCAPs): Employees can set aside up to $7,500 in pre-tax dollars for child care costs.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs): Provide confidential counseling, referrals, and support.

Make scheduling more flexible.

When possible, options like predictable shifts, telecommuting, or flexible hours help families manage care and reduce stress.

Provide direct child care support - options may include:

- Offer onsite care at reduced rates*
- Partner with licensed providers to reserve slots or lower tuition
- Give a monthly stipend to offset child care costs
- Provide backup options, like "Just in Time Care"

Keep the conversation open.

Employees often turn down promotions, raises, or extra hours to maintain eligibility for state assistance. Families fall off the "benefits cliff"—earning too much to qualify for help, but not earning enough to make ends meet.

*Beginning in 2026, federal tax credits will cover 40–50% of these expenses (up to $500,000–$600,000 annually, depending on business size).

> "Having affordable, reliable, and flexible child care options is critical for working families. Our employees will be at their best when their families are taken care of and thriving."
>
> New Castle County Employer

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> "Access to quality child care continues to be a challenge in our community. Finding solutions must be a top priority."
>
> Kent County Employer

Advocate For Policy Change: Use Your Voice

Employers and business leaders are critical, trusted messengers in Delaware. By speaking up, you can help expand child care options in our state that strengthen your workforce and the overall economy.

Expand Access to Care

Challenges	Solutions: Ask Policymakers to Take Action	Decisionmakers		
		Governor	General Assembly	Dept. of Health and Social Services
Virtually no care available during evenings and weekends—and no incentives to offer it.	Implement incentives for providers to offer nontraditional hours			
Delaware only offers public programming to families who earn up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level ($64,500 for a family of four), ranking 43rd nationally and reaching only 1 in 5 children.	Raise income eligibility for state-funded care			
Many families earn too much to qualify for subsidies, but far too little to afford care.				
Families are disincentivized to earn more because they will be no better off when they lose their public assistance.	Ease the benefits cliff by adjusting the family copayment and increasing eligibility			

Increase Supply of Care

Challenges	Solutions: Ask Policymakers to Take Action ** no cost associated	Decisionmakers			
		Governor	General Assembly	Dept. of Education	State Housing Authority
Low wages and limited benefits for child care workers	Invest more state dollars so child care staff can earn livable wages and benefits.				
Licensing is still paper-based and overly burdensome.	Modernize licensing and streamline regulations while maintaining quality **				
Providers lack shared services (finance, HR, maintenance, food/nutrition, IT) and cannot access substitutes across sites.	Support shared services and update policy to enable a substitute pool **				
Limited start-up capital or capacity building funds.	Provide financial tools, and leverage existing resources—including low-interest loans, start-up grants, and infrastructure funds Make child care an industry of interest for state business development funds **				
Multi-family housing rarely includes child care.	Award extra points in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit projects that include on-site child care **				
Disjointed funding streams.	Consolidate pre-K and child care funding into a single agency to create efficiencies.				

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