Brighter Futures INDIANA

Policies for Working Families: Notes

May 7, 2026

These notes offer a summary of the Brighter Futures Indiana Policies for Working Families webinar from May 7, 2026. They are not a direct transcript.

Introductory Presentation

Indiana Data

- Recommended annual cost of child care as percent of income: 7%. (Child Care Aware of America, 2026)
- Cost of child care in top Indiana counties:
  - Marion: 17.4% of annual income.
  - Tippecanoe: 14.3% of annual income.
  - Monroe: 12.6% of annual income. (Brighter Futures Indiana, 2026)
- Cost of child care by state averages:
  - Married couple: 10% of annual income.
  - Single parent: 33% of annual income. (Child Care Aware of America, 2022)
- Comprehensive high-quality, birth-to-five early education: 13% return on investment. (The Heckman Equation)

For more data, visit the Brighter Futures Indiana Data Center. For resources to support your employees, visit the Brighter Futures Indiana For a Stronger Workforce webpage.

National Landscape Review

- Caregivers include all kinds – a parent of a teen with substance issues, a grandparent parenting their grandchild full-time, the growing sandwich generation, the couple that just found out they are pregnant, and more.
- Many individuals do not identify as caregivers (including many men). Many caregivers hide this invisible labor from their employers for fear of being labeled less dependable.
- There is a shortage of professional child and adult care providers, and thus more of the workforce will be impacted by caregiving in the next few years.
- “Child care isn’t optional. It is a gatekeeper to employment.”

- When people take a leave of absence, there is a cost to both the employer and the employee. Employers can step in and make a difference, often preventing the leave of absence altogether.
- 60% of caregivers screen positive for depression or anxiety and over half of caregivers are living paycheck to paycheck. Caregivers are faring more poorly than their counterparts across almost every measure.
- Caregiving is "a second shift that never really ends."

Panelists

- **Carla Moquin**, Founder of Parenting in the Workplace Institute
- **Freedom Kolb**, CEO of The Milk Bank
- **Jennifer Sabatini Fraone**, Strategic Advisor and Founder of Jennifer Sabatini Fraone Consulting, LLC; Former Executive Director of the Boston College Center for Work & Family

Panel Discussion

- *To Carla:* Having touched on local and national data, the realities caregivers face, it's time to dive into some policies to address it. How does **bring your baby to work**...work? Don't babies disrupt other workers?
  - The key is setting up a structured policy. I strongly recommend using a templated policy structure with proven parameters.
  - Babies can't be disruptive; put this in your policy.
  - Babies can bond with coworkers, creating a community bond with the parents, and they get intellectual stimulation being around office conversations.
  - Employers should have a room available where babies can go when they are noisy for more than a few moments. Parents will go to them at the first sound of noise.
- *To Freedom:* The Milk Bank has a bring your baby to work program. Can you touch on how that's worked for your organization?
  - We have had a bring your baby to work policy for 20 years. It's in the handbook. Parents sign a release and can bring their babies with them to work for up to six months.
  - We have had 10 babies so far over 20 years. We call them "office babies," and they are met with celebration.
  - The babies get lots of stimulation, and parents still control how they want the baby to be parented in the office environment. For example, parents can decide if they want everyone to hold the baby or only a few select coworkers.

    - Bring your baby to work is a “boring” thing at The Milk Bank because it isn’t disruptive at all.
- *To Carla:* Have you heard from other businesses that have implemented bring your baby to work policies? How has it impacted personnel and workplace culture?
    - A lot of employers have tried this in a structured setting and it works; credit unions, government agencies, schools, museums – 30+ types of organizations have done this.
    - Bring your baby to work leads to higher morale, retention of the parents *and* coworkers, increased recruitment because people want to work at a place like this. It attracts customers too.
    - It is free to implement this program.
- *To Freedom:* There are other policies that impact workplace culture, too. You are an expert on The PUMP Act and lactation at work. What is needed to facilitate **nursing in the workplace**?
    - The PUMP Act was transformative. It came out in 2022 and now every employer is expected to be fully compliant. It closed loopholes; every nursing woman employed in the U.S. is covered now. There are consequences for employers who don’t follow the rules. If mom isn’t fully released from her duties during nursing time at work, she needs to be paid during that time.
- *To Carla:* As Freedom indicated, lactation at work, by law, is mandatory in every sector. But bring your baby to work policies are optional. In what industries does this practice work best? Are there any for which this policy does not work well?
    - The main factor is safety for the baby. Some companies can cross train and put a baby in a desk job instead of the lab, for example, for the 3 or 4 months that the baby comes to the office.
    - Bring your baby to work policies work more broadly than many companies expect if they are willing to give it a try.
- *To Jennifer:* We’ve learned about nursing rooms and babies in the workplace. What are some other free or low-cost policies today’s attendees could implement to support working families?
    - **Train managers to be caregiving allies.** Managers fear having conversations with their teams, but this is a way they can provide support.
    - **Communicate the benefits your organization offers.** Some businesses offer Employee Assistance Programs or subsidies for child care, but employees may not know about them. Push back on vendors, too. Ask them about other support they can provide for caregivers.
    - **Offer flexibility.** Being in the office five days a week affects caregivers more than other employees. Even if your office requires five days per week in office, perhaps there are other ways an employer can be flexible. Employees can start their days and end their days earlier or switch shifts with someone in an emergency, for example.
    - **Offer parent or caregiving groups.** Employee resource groups for working families can be included in diversity and inclusion efforts. Caregiving crosses every demographic. Bring caregivers together to bounce ideas off of each other and be validated and supported by peers.
    - For policies to be successful, leadership needs to get on board first. They need to understand the caregiving crisis.
    - It is okay to talk about caregiving at work. Leaders can even share their own caregiving stories.
    - These policies create a positive workplace for everyone, not just parents.

- *To all panelists:*
    - How much time does it take to stand up these policies? How much does it cost?
        - Babies at Work: Use the free template from Parenting in the Workplace Institute to formulate your policy. Time is nominal and really only requires meeting with the parent who is bringing the baby to make sure they have a plan.
        - Lactation: Have a policy in place before it is needed. Check the Wellness Council of Indiana and The Milk Bank for resources to create your policy. Don't recreate the wheel. A lactation room does not need to be a permanent space; it just must be available when needed. And when its needed, the policy and the room needs to be turnkey. When no one is lactating is the time to set it up. Some industries might be trickier, such as hospitality or fast food where there is little to no extra space.
        - Resource group: Create an alliance with the human resources department and leadership. Do an assessment of your organization's current policies, look for what's out there and ask what else your vendors can provide. Caregiving groups are usually started on the ground level unless an organization already has a formal resource group structure. All that is needed is one person to make the effort and set the date and time and lead the first resource group meeting.
    - What is one piece of simple, actionable advice you'd like to give attendees today? Where do employers start?
        - Jennifer: Make a compelling case for why. 73% of workers would change jobs for a more family-friendly workplace.
        - Freedom: Put something on your calendar right now that you are going to follow up on. You don't need a white paper. It's simple, and the ROI is already shown. Pick one thing and put it on the calendar.
        - Carla: Don't be afraid to try one of these policies. Just do it!