

Taking the Next Step: A Guide to How the Business Community Can Engage in Childcare

BE A BUSINESS CHAMPION FOR EARLY EDUCATION



GET THE FACTS and understand why early education matters to your business' bottom line and the American economy.



EDUCATE your executive and/or leadership team about care and its central importance to your business.



ASSESS the ways that you can help be a leader on the issue and advance early education.

- Use your voice as a business leader to influence the public conversation and policies and raise early education's importance to the economy and workforce development.
 - Join a business coalition or effort in your region that is working on early education. Add it to the agenda of a group you are already part of.
 - Take stock of your own company policies to support working families and discuss them with your leadership team.
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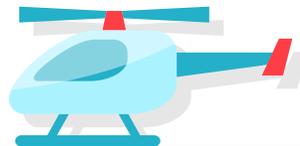
DEVELOP strategies to implement company policies, influence the conversation and public policy, and invest in the community.

Taking Action

Business Leadership for the Country and Economy

As a business leader, you have the ability to influence what issues become priorities for our country. At the local, state, and federal levels, your voices can put childcare on the map with the general public and consumers, as well as with policymakers. Strong leadership from the business community has the power to change the game.

WHAT	HOW	DONE
Put childcare on the map for other business leaders	Propose that care be a top agenda item for any trade groups, business coalitions, and task forces of which you are a part.	✓
Advocate for public policy	Advocate for smart and effective public policy on care at the local, state, and federal levels; work with local and federal advocacy groups to create transparency and accountability in the childcare system so that everyone better understands how money is spent and quality is ensured.	
Join sign-on letters or pledges	Offer to list your name or business on sign-on letters, pledges, and the like, that aim to advance the issue of childcare. You can often find out more about these letters through the local, state, and national coalitions and advocacy groups working on this issue.	
Use your public voice to drive the conversation	Write an op-ed or blog post for a regional or state publication, engage in already existing social media campaigns related to care, or use your own social media to make your voice heard.	
Use your customer base or membership base to influence	Use your customer base or chamber membership base to share information about why childcare is important to your company and its employees or business more broadly. Include the topic of childcare and its relevance to your workforce or your personal story and relationship to childcare in your company's newsletter.	
Make public appearances	Host a speaker at your board or company meeting or leadership retreat on the relevance of early education and care to your company; offer and agree to be a speaker at a local, state, or federal event on early care and education.	



Supporting the Broader Community

Your business plays an integral role in the local economy. You have worked hard to gain your status as both a desired employer and trusted community member. By considering how you can invest in childcare for the broader community, you are sending a clear message to your community, employees, and consumers about the type of culture you are creating and your dedication to the families that keep your lights on. You are also bolstering the economic development of your community, which can have substantial positive effects on your business such as increased consumer spending, less crime, higher wages, and improved public health.

WHAT	HOW	DONE
Connect with your local chamber	Check in with your local chamber to see what kind of work it is doing on childcare. If it isn't focused on early learning, educate the chamber about its importance to economic development and help make it a priority in your region.	✓
Join or create a cross-sector coalition	Create or join an existing coalition of local business, community, and childcare leaders to explore challenges and opportunities; identify new partnerships; and develop innovative, communitywide strategies for improving access and delivery of high-quality childcare.	
Make in-kind contributions to help support local childcare providers	Use your organization's skills to support the business side of local childcare centers. Explore setting up a shared-services program and assist childcare providers by pooling and streamlining back office functions like purchasing, payroll, and billing.	
Invest your philanthropic dollars in organizations and providers that support early care and learning programs for low-income children	Target corporate social responsibility funds to programs and initiatives that support high-quality childcare, such as scholarship programs to help ensure that low-income children have access to high-quality programs.	
Consider Social Impact Bonds	Support early education and care through Social Impact Bonds to fund high-quality early childhood programs. Social Impact Bonds are a public-private-nonprofit partnership that raises private investment capital to fund (evidence-based) services to achieve pre-agreed social outcomes.	



Supporting Your Employees and Strengthening Your Bottom Line

You can implement policies at your company to help parents obtain and provide the care their children need, while enabling children to reap the benefits of that care. In the end, these policies bolster your bottom line through increased productivity and the ability of your company to attract and retain the talent it needs to succeed. For those with the financial resources, these provide examples of different ways that you can support your employees.

WHAT	HOW	DONE!
Find out what your employees' needs are	Survey your workforce on their work-family needs, and collect data on utilization rates of your existing programs.	✓
Offer flexible work arrangements	Policies such as telecommuting and flexible start/stop times enable employees to better integrate their work responsibilities with their caregiving responsibilities.	
Educate your employees about their tax and subsidy eligibility	Many of your employees may not be aware of which local, state, and federal tax breaks and programs they may be eligible for to help with the cost of care. Work with your accountant to conduct an educational session or compile a fact sheet for your employees.	
Create a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for your employees	An FSA provides a tax break for families and is available through the benefits package offered by a company. An FSA can be used to pay for up to \$5,000 of childcare-related expenses using pretax dollars.	
Contribute to or subsidize childcare	Contribute up to \$5,000 of the cost of each employee's child without the subsidy being added to their taxable income. This also saves you from paying employment taxes on that portion because it is not taxed as income.	
Provide access to a care marketplace or resource and referral service	Provide membership to any number of online marketplaces or resource and referral services that can help your employees identify care in their area.	
Provide backup care options	Some companies can set up a service for both in-home and center-based backup care for when employees' regular care arrangements fall through.	
Provide on-site childcare	Build an on-site childcare center; think about the broadest possible swath of your workforce that could have access to this center.	



TAKE ACTION

It's often easy to overlook childcare providers as part of the business community. Shared Services Alliances provide business leaders with a distinct opportunity to support childcare providers for the betterment of their communities. Here's how to help:



Front the cost of shared services:

Invest in creating and developing Shared Services Alliances.



Offer space to promote quality:

Fund or offer your own space to centralize Alliance operations.



Champion better policy:

Push for solutions to long-standing barriers around policy and offer a fresh approach to sustained solutions.



Donations:

Provide time, office supplies, furniture, or services (e.g., bookkeeping, training, taxes, or auditing) to lessen financial burdens being carried by a Shared Services Alliance.



Get involved with a collective:

Pool contributions and reach out to your business allies and let them know about the importance of supporting childcare.