



# Balancing Work and Family

## Information for SIAST Students

### 1. **Balancing Work and Family – what does it mean?**

Work-family/life balance is now recognized as a major economic and social issue in most industrialized countries, including Canada. The issue is about assisting employees to be effective in their ‘earning’ and ‘caring’ roles now that most Canadian families are dual-earner families, and most lone-parents are in the paid labour force. The goal is for employees to be able to balance their work and family responsibilities.

The caring roles of employees include their responsibilities for children, for elders, and for other family members when they are ill or injured.

### 2. **Why is Balancing Work and Family important?**

National and international studies point out that numerous benefits can result from the creation of workplaces that are more family-friendly.

#### **Employee benefits include:**

- an increased ability to respond to family emergencies;
- gaining a sense of control over their lives;
- an increased ability to have time and energy for children and/or elderly parents;
- more time and energy for friends, hobbies, sports and community; and
- a healthier lifestyle in terms of stress reduction, improved nutrition, and exercise.

#### **Employer benefits include:**

- better recruiting – recent studies have identified work-life balance as an issue prospective employees seriously consider;
- reduced turnover and time associated with interviewing, hiring, and training new workers;
- an increase in employee loyalty and morale; and
- reduced absenteeism and stress.

#### **Community benefits include:**

- employees are more available to participate in civic and community activities such as coaching and volunteer work;
- less health care costs;
- healthier, happier children; and
- increased citizen involvement in building social capital at the local level.

### 3. **What characteristics do ‘family-friendly’ workplaces have?**

Based on research in North America and Europe, the Work and Family Unit has identified five basic characteristics of a family-friendly workplace.

- **Flexibility:** this refers to an operational style that, as much as possible, allows employees to have some capacity to adapt their workday to respond to family issues such as a child becoming ill, school visits, or special needs of elders. It typically includes family responsibility leave for employees.
- **Supportive Supervisors/Managers:** this refers to a management style that values staff, and is characterized by a desire to help employees achieve better balance between work and the rest of their lives.

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To contact the Work and Family Unit:

Visit our website: [www.labour.gov.sk.ca](http://www.labour.gov.sk.ca).

Saskatoon call: (306) 933-7983

- **A Culture that is Family-Friendly:** this type of workplace is characterized by overall attitudes, beliefs, values, and taken-for-granted ways of doing things that support work-family issues as legitimate workplace concerns; and as an opportunity to develop 'new ways of working.'
- **Alternative Work Arrangements:** this means an array of options are available to employees including daily or scheduled flextime arrangements, job-sharing, reduced hours, compressed work week, family leave options, telecommuting, other leaves, and sabbatical options. Such alternative work arrangements are seen as ways of working, and employees using them are not sidelined, marginalized or belittled.
- **Recognition of Child and Elder Care Issues:** this might include providing some form of support for child care, providing access to a referral service regarding child or elder care, establishing on-site child care or, as has been done in some Canadian cities, developing a consortium with other employers in order to provide emergency child care. This includes accommodating the needs of employees who are breastfeeding their children.

#### **4. Where can I go for more information?**

Visit the website of the Work and Family Unit, Saskatchewan Labour at:  
[www.workandfamilybalance.com](http://www.workandfamilybalance.com)

Or, contact us at:

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