

# Practices for Reconciling Work and Family

## Objective

To promote gender equality and family-friendliness in the workplace and to implement practices that support the reconciliation of work and family.

## Why?

Reconciling work and family, as well as promoting family-friendliness, is part of an organisation's personnel and operational strategy, its responsibility practices, and its approach to diversity management.

A family-friendly culture and family-oriented workplace practices enhance employee wellbeing, job satisfaction and commitment, as well as the organisation's attractiveness and employer reputation. A workplace that is visibly family-friendly in both culture and values, and has established work-family reconciliation practices can also play a major role when a family or an employee is considering relocating to a new city.

In addition to statutory parenting leave, practices that support reconciling work and family and other family friendly workplace practices apply to all employees.

Family may mean different things to different people: children, a spouse or a partner, ageing parents and close loved ones, other relatives, or pets.

→ What does family-friendliness mean in your workplace?

# Examples of Practices for Reconciling Work and Family

Below are examples you can use and adapt to your workplace when developing family-friendly practices.

## Providing Support and Flexibility

- Develop workplace practices and shared guidelines for reconciling work and family.
  - Ensure that the guidelines consider different family forms and situations so that practices do not focus solely on assumed nuclear family models.
  - Make sure the guidelines are available in the languages used in a multilingual workplace (e.g., Finnish and English) so they are accessible to all employees.
- Inform staff about family-friendly flexibility options and practices that support work-family reconciliation during staff meetings and through internal channels, such as the intranet or noticeboards. Include this information in the onboarding of new employees and trainees.
- Enable flexible working time arrangements and solutions that accommodate each employee's individual family situation. Examples include flexible working hours, temporarily reduced or compressed working hours, lighter or adjusted duties, part time work, remote and hybrid work, the ability to influence one's own work shifts and holiday schedules and the provision of paid or unpaid leave.
  - Discuss openly that in some family situations greater flexibility may occasionally be required than in others.
  - Recognize family-friendly flexibility needs that do not relate only to young children. For example, ensure equal treatment of childless employees when agreeing on shifts and holidays.
  - The workplace gender equality plan is a suitable place to describe family-friendly practices and monitor the implementation of related actions.
- Consider to what extent the employer can finance family-friendly organised services. For example, care services for a sick child, home care services for an elderly relative, or organised activities for school-aged children during the summer months.

## Strengthening Supervisors' Competence

- Ensure that supervisors have sufficient knowledge of family-friendly practices, such as parenting leave policies, work–family reconciliation practices, available flexibility options, and how to organise or adjust work duties.
- Include discussions about family situations in development discussions and talk about flexible working time solutions and individual arrangements that prevent overload, taking into account each person's life situation.
- Allow absences to be reported easily – for example, when a child is sick – and respond supportively. Avoid assuming that employees should work remotely while caring for a sick child.

## A Safe and Encouraging Work Culture

- Create a family-friendly work culture together with the work community: one that allows for an open and safe atmosphere for discussing families, different family situations, and the strains related to reconciling work and family.
- Acknowledge different family forms and situations and enhance the entire work community's understanding of diverse families.
- Understand the concept of “family” at the workplace more broadly than only families with children. For employees, family may also include ageing parents, other close relatives, or pets.
- Ensure that local workplace agreements and other plans or practices describing family-friendly approaches include all parents, guardians, their partners, and other adults involved in a child's life – as well as childless families.
- Show empathy when an employee or colleague shares news about a child, spouse/partner, or other family member experiencing serious illness, palliative care, or death.
- Support an employee who has lost a child or loved one by listening, allowing space for conversation, and respecting their privacy. As a gesture of support, you may for example offer condolence flowers.

## Other Practices

- Support reconciliation of work and family for employees working at different times by scheduling meetings and staff events between 9:00 and 15:00.
- Encourage employees to maintain balance between work, family, and other personal life. Do not expect them to answer messages or emails during their free time.
- In addition to a staff survey, you may explore work–family reconciliation by conducting a separate survey for employees’ family members (employees forward the survey to a family member of their choice).
- Facilitate dropping off children at daycare or school by providing nearby parking spaces or bicycle parking that can accommodate family bikes or child trailers.
- Keep in mind that work–family reconciliation during the summer holiday period may be easier if new employees are granted paid annual leave in their first year, regardless of when their employment began.

## Family-Friendliness in Communication, Recruitment and Onboarding

- Increase awareness of family-friendliness by highlighting work–family reconciliation practices through internal communication channels.
- Strengthen the organisation’s employer image by showcasing family-friendly practices also in external communication, such as on the organisation’s website.
- Present family-friendly practices and work–family reconciliation options already during the recruitment process – for example, in job advertisements and interviews.
  - A job applicant can better assess the position in relation to their life situation when the job advertisement includes information on duties, working hours, available flexibility, the work location, and whether remote or hybrid work is possible. These aspects should also be discussed during the job interview.
- Use imagery in communications that reflect diverse families.
- Ensure that work–family reconciliation practices are also included in onboarding materials for new employees and trainees.

## Support from Occupational Health Services

- Offer employees support and counselling through occupational health services in situations where reconciling work and family is especially demanding.
- Increase cooperation with occupational health services during an employee's pregnancy and ensure safe working conditions at the workplace.
- Plan the return to work together with occupational health services for employees who have been absent due to heavy or difficult family circumstances – for example, an employee who has experienced a miscarriage or is grieving the death of a child or spouse/partner.

## See the other method cards

- [Parenting Leave Practices](#)
- [Practices that consider different family forms and situations](#)
- [Practices for Preventing Pregnancy Discrimination and Parenting Leave Discrimination](#)
- [Family-Friendliness as Part of the Workplace Gender Equality Plan](#)

## Sources and further information

- [Work and family reconciliation | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health](#)
- [Balancing work and family | Finnish Institute of Occupational Health](#)
- [Family-friendly practices | Family Federation of Finland](#)

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