



Wellthy

GUIDE

Creating a Caregiver-Friendly Open Enrollment Event

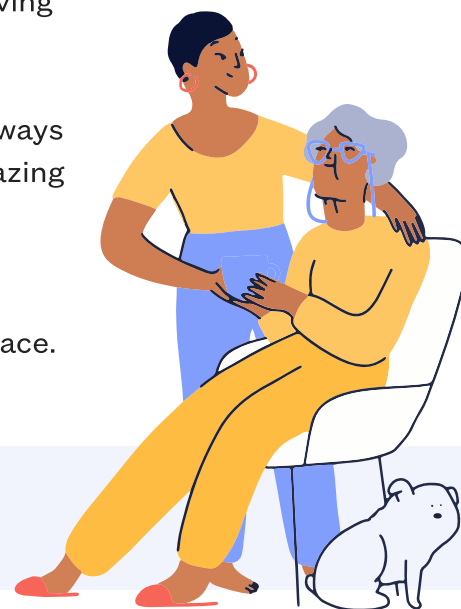


How caregiver-friendly is your company's open enrollment experience?

Supporting caregivers through health and wellness programs has become critical to retaining talent, boosting productivity, and fostering diverse, inclusive company cultures. Many employers are adding or expanding family care benefits, leave policies, and flexible work arrangements — but providing meaningful support hinges on caregiving employees knowing what's available to them.

As HR leaders plan communication around open enrollment, finding ways to make it a caregiver-friendly experience will help ensure those amazing new programs and benefits get to the people who need them most.

In this guide, we share unique considerations and best-practices for reaching, communicating and engaging with caregivers in the workplace.



Designing open enrollment with a focus on caregiving employees will help:

- ✓ **Maximize benefits utilization**
These new programs and policies won't be effective if the employees who could benefit most don't know about them, don't understand them, or don't take advantage of them. Focusing on reaching caregivers through your open enrollment event translates to more awareness and utilization of benefits, and delivers that intended relief to families managing care.
- ✓ **Foster a culture of inclusion**
Caregiving disproportionately impacts women, people of color, and low-wage earners. Catering your open enrollment experience to the needs of caregiving employees can help them feel seen and included, while enabling them to reach their fullest potential.
- ✓ **Build loyalty in a hot talent market**
Open enrollment is a chance to highlight all of your benefits and strengthen employee loyalty. Amid the 'Great Resignation,' it's more important than ever to showcase what you're doing for your people. In this competitive job market, employees who don't feel supported aren't afraid to look elsewhere for new opportunities.



Did you know? 68% of employers say communication of benefits and wellbeing programs is their most important benefit priority¹.

Help employees identify as caregivers

Many individuals who care for loved ones don't label their situation as "caregiving," and therefore don't take advantage of caregiving resources. In trying to reach this population during open enrollment, positioning your offerings as "caregiving benefits" may not resonate.

On top of that, many people still hesitate to share the tough family care issues they're grappling with at home. They fear that admitting to caregiving will undermine their career trajectory or make them seem less committed at work. All of this can prevent caregivers from getting the support they need.

Rather than referring to "caregivers," try to speak to the specific situations a person may be navigating: ie, "employees managing chronic health conditions," "parents of children with special needs," or "employees caring for an aging parent."

In promotional content, share stories and examples of how employees have found support from these resources (with their permission, of course!). Hearing stories from others with family care challenges helps create a culture that destigmatizes caregiving and encourages benefit utilization.

Recognize the many forms caregiving takes

The caregiving experience is unique to each person, and it's important to consider this when communicating your care-related benefits.

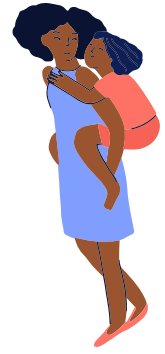
Caregiving occurs at all life stages and includes childcare, senior care, a complex or ongoing health condition, special needs, mental health, care for a veteran, and more. Individuals with diverse and intersectional needs often have additional care considerations as well.

In many of these situations, the loved one who an employee is caring for isn't a dependent and isn't covered on their health plan. That means the employee could be navigating their loved one's benefits or public programs in addition to their own. When thinking about supporting caregivers during open enrollment, it can be helpful to provide resources about ACA enrollment, Medicare, VA benefits, and other programs that can provide access to care for those who need it.



Consider generational differences

When it comes to caregiving concerns, Gen X and Millennials are most likely to be sandwiched between caring for their children and their aging parents. In fact, Millennials now make up over a third of the multigenerational caregiver population³. Baby Boomers, on the other hand, may be starting to think about their own care needs as they approach retirement. They may or may not be caring for aging parents, teenagers or adult children as well.



The caregiving resources that appeal most to employees may differ generationally, but it's also important to know that the pandemic thrust many Millennial and Gen Z individuals into caregiving roles for the first time³. Caregiving is completely new for these employees, and they may need extra help understanding benefits and resources that they did not need previously.

Understand the shift in employees' priorities



Employees are looking more closely at the benefits offered to them this year. In light of the pandemic, they're more concerned about their health and wellbeing than ever before and want a better understanding of the resources that are available to them.

Employees will be paying extra close attention to mental health and caregiving support, remote work, financial resources, and long-term disability benefits². They may want to protect their family's health and financial security with coverage that they hadn't considered in previous years, and they may need guidance on using both new and existing benefits.

Rethink open enrollment event offerings

With an understanding of the employee caregiver perspective, let's now look at the open enrollment event itself. For caregivers, flexibility and options are key.

- ✓ Provide a mix of onsite and virtual events to reach in-person, remote, and hybrid employees
- ✓ Make your virtual open enrollment activities mobile-friendly. Employees who are juggling care with work may find they have less time to sit down and think about open enrollment. Giving them an option to participate while they're on the go can help with benefits education and utilization
- ✓ Offer events on multiple days and during different time windows to accommodate caregivers' work and home schedules

Leverage all communication channels

The best way to reach caregiving employees is to communicate with them where they are.

- ✓ Utilize multiple channels: email, intranet, company messaging channels, signage in break rooms, etc.
- ✓ Try sending communication at different times of day
- ✓ Lean on employee resource groups and managers to help get the word out
- ✓ Hold office hours to give employees the opportunity to ask questions related to their unique situations
- ✓ Consider the technology preferences of the employees in your workforce
- ✓ Use tactics like home mailers to communicate with employees' families as well



Create a culture of care beyond open enrollment

In the blink of an eye, anyone can become a caregiver. Establishing a caring culture is a year-round effort that helps employees feel safe to seek caregiving support, whenever they need it.

In addition to marketing materials that raise awareness of benefits, manager support and word of mouth are critical drivers of utilization. Managers can make a real difference in encouraging employees to open up about their needs. With the right training, managers can learn how to foster a culture of care, help identify team members who show warning signs of caregiver burnout, and get caregiving employees the support they need.



Wellthy is a digital care concierge for families with chronic, complex and ongoing care needs. Wellthy offers a robust caregiving platform and personalized support to help families tackle the logistical and administrative tasks of caring for the ones they love, including themselves. For more information, please visit wellthy.com or email hi@wellthy.com.

Citations:

1. Willis Towers Watson. "2021 Emerging From the Pandemic Survey" (2021)
2. Society for Human Resource Management. "Open Enrollment Planning Gets Underway" (2021)
3. New York Life. "Caregiving and COVID-19: how the pandemic is expanding the sandwich generation" (2021)