



# Cancer Support

Domain Solutions



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## The Importance of Cancer Support

A cancer diagnosis may present changes and challenges for your employees. Policies and resources to support those with a cancer diagnosis or those caring for family members or friends with cancer can show that you care about your employees and that you will do what you can to help. Flexible scheduling, the latest cancer information, and other resources can help employees get back on their feet more quickly and help you retain them.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) can help you help your employees access services such as free rides to treatment, free lodging near hospitals, and a 24/7 cancer helpline.<sup>(1)</sup>

Evidence-based practices for cancer support cover a broad spectrum, including:

- Policies for employee sick and medical leave
- Flexible scheduling and HR support
- Resources to support patients and caregivers
- Health insurance coverage for clinical trials
- In-network coverage of cancer treatment at nationally recognized programs/centers
- Communication with employees



# Evidence-Based Practice 1: Policies for Employee Sick and Medical Leave

One of the ways you can help create a healthy and productive workforce is by supporting paid sick and medical leave. Research shows that employees are more likely to seek preventive medical care, including recommended cancer screenings<sup>(2)(3)</sup>, when they have access to paid sick leave. Paid medical leave can help employees avoid financial hardship and may be the difference between keeping and losing those people.<sup>(4)(5)</sup> It can also help reduce employee turnover and boost morale by providing support during a stressful time.

Managers who support sick and medical leave use are an important example for other managers and for employees they supervise.<sup>(6)(7)</sup> For more information about leave policies, human resources managers should consult professional sites such as the Society for Human Resource Management.

## Implementation Options

The following information covers the components of an effective cancer support plan.

**Define a policy for paid short-term absences due to minor illnesses or to accommodate health care appointments.** Employers may offer sick leave or bundle sick and vacation leave in a plan called Paid Time Off (PTO). Sick or PTO leave is commonly used for short-term acute illnesses such as colds or flus, or in short increments to accommodate health care appointments such as cancer screening.

**Define an employee paid medical leave policy.** An employee medical leave policy defines your company's rules for medical leave. Medical leave is commonly used for longer-term health issues during which an employee cannot work such as major surgery or some cancer treatments.

**Provide written and easily accessible policies.** Ensure that your policies are written and easily accessible to employees in the employee handbook or on the company website.



**Promote sick and medical leave policies.** Promoting sick and medical leave policies and educating employees about them should be part of your plan. Clear information about the policies should be accessible in the employee handbook or on the company website.

Ensure that your current sick and medical leave policies address all of the components described above. Copies of the policies should be distributed to all employees, and reminders sent annually at the start of cold and flu season (approximately September). In addition to the employee handbook, your policies should be easily accessible in the employee handbook or on the company website.

## Tools and Resources\*

### *Tools and resources to assist employers*

- Sick, Medical Leave, and Flexible Scheduling Checklists  
<https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Sick-Medical-Leave-and-Flexible-Scheduling-Checklists-v12.pdf>
- Improving the Cancer Patient Experience (Your Cancer Benefits Strategy)  
[https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft\\_v9.pdf](https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft_v9.pdf)
- National Business Group on Health – Cancer Resources  
<https://www.businessgrouphealth.org/topics/disease-prevention-condition-management/cancer/>

### *Additional reading*

- ACS information about the Family and Medical Leave Act  
<https://www.cancer.org/treatment/finding-and-paying-for-treatment/understanding-financial-and-legal-matters/family-and-medical-leave-act.html>

*\* Inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement by the American Cancer Society*



## Evidence-Based Practice 2: Flexible Scheduling and HR Support

You can further support a culture of health by offering employees the option to modify their daily work schedules.<sup>(8)</sup> Research shows that flexible schedules, phased return-to-work plans, teleworking, non-traditional work hours or days, alternate work assignments, and related accommodations are associated with healthy lifestyle changes among employees.<sup>(9) (10) (11)</sup>

For employees dealing with illnesses such as cancer, these accommodations are especially important in easing the burden of continuing to work through treatment or returning to work after an extended absence. Providing special work accommodations may also directly benefit companies by boosting productivity and retention of valued personnel.<sup>(12)</sup>

### Implementation Options

**Create a scheduling policy.** When creating a scheduling policy, you may want to consider some key questions that will be of interest to employees. Please see the *Sick Leave, Medical Leave, and Flexible Scheduling Checklists* for example key questions.

**Provide training for human resources personnel.** Training for your HR specialists should be provided by a reputable source, such as the Society for Human Resource Management. Training should focus on such topics as assisting employees with flexible and alternative schedules, planning a medical or caregiving leave, supporting employees with appropriate accommodations, and methods for efficiently connecting employees with relevant company resources (for example, those offered by an employee assistance program [EAP]).

### Tools and Resources\*

#### *Tools and resources to assist employers*

- Sick, Medical Leave, and Flexible Scheduling Checklists  
<https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Sick-Medical-Leave-and-Flexible-Scheduling-Checklists-v12.pdf>



- Cancer In the Workplace (Tip Sheet for Human Resources)  
<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/online-documents/en/pdf/flyers/cancer-in-the-workplace-hr-tip-sheet.pdf>
- Cancer in the Workplace (Tip Sheet for Supervisors)  
<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/online-documents/en/pdf/flyers/cancer-in-the-workplace-supervisor-tip-sheet.pdf>
- What to Expect When Your Employee Has Cancer  
[https://www.cancerandcareers.org/grid/publication/pdf/4e989a80f532f700010000e3/publication\\_pdf.1456783908.Manager\\_s\\_Kit\\_WHAT\\_TO\\_EXPECT.pdf](https://www.cancerandcareers.org/grid/publication/pdf/4e989a80f532f700010000e3/publication_pdf.1456783908.Manager_s_Kit_WHAT_TO_EXPECT.pdf)
- Improving the Cancer Patient Experience (Your Cancer Benefits Strategy)  
[https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft\\_v9.pdf](https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft_v9.pdf)
- National Business Group on Health – Cancer Resources  
<https://www.businessgrouphealth.org/topics/disease-prevention-condition-management/cancer/>

#### ***Tools and Resources for employees***

- Cancer in the Workplace (Tip Sheet for Human Resources)  
<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/online-documents/en/pdf/flyers/cancer-in-the-workplace-hr-tip-sheet.pdf>

#### ***Additional reading***

- The Benefits of Flexible Working Arrangements: A Future of Work Report  
<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/cwf/individuals/pdf/benefitsCEOFlex.pdf>

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## Evidence-Based Practice 3: Resources to Support Patients and Caregivers

Supporting employees diagnosed with cancer or those caring for a loved one with the disease is an important and meaningful part of promoting a healthy workplace. Research shows that employees who perceive that their employers are as accommodating their cancer treatments are more likely to return to work.<sup>(13)</sup> And being at work is linked to a range of positive outcomes for employees facing a cancer diagnosis.<sup>(14) (15)</sup>

More than 1 in 6 working Americans report caregiving responsibilities, underscoring the potential benefit to employers of providing support for employees in caregiving roles.<sup>(16)</sup> The range of support that can be offered includes workshops and webinars available through EAPs, on-site support group meetings, and paid sick leave to care for a family member with cancer.

### Implementation Options

**Provide a resource summary.** Provide patients and caregivers with a summary that describes workshops, webinars, EAP services, and HR contacts. Having this information in one place will help employees and caregivers find needed information easily.

**Host workshops or webinars.** Workshops or webinars that address the needs of employees and family members living with a diagnosis could be developed internally or delivered through a reputable source. First, consider first investigating EAP options. Options that can be archived or accessed through web-based platforms offer employees the flexibility to access resources outside of work. To raise awareness of such resources, they could be featured quarterly in company-wide communications.

**Define a caregiver-support policy.** A caregiver-support policy defines your company's rules and resources related to caregiving. Ensure the policy is easily accessible to employees in the employee handbook and on the company website. Work with your HR team, your health insurers or brokers, and ACS to compile information on available resources so that you can draft an effective caregiver support policy.





ACS defines a caregiver as the person who most often provides support to someone facing cancer and who is not paid to do so. They may be a family member, a close friend, a coworker, or a neighbor. Since many aspects of cancer care happen on an outpatient basis, caregivers may take on a variety of different roles and responsibilities. Reliable caregiver support is very important to the physical and emotional well-being of someone with a cancer diagnosis. And self-care and support for the caregiver are equally important. Ensure your policy clearly addresses the following components:

- How is a caregiver defined within your company context?
- What policies support employees as patients or caregivers, such as medical leave (FMLA Family and Medical Leave Act), personal leave, or flexible scheduling?
- What benefits are available that can support employees as patients or caregivers, such as health insurance, disability insurance, or EAP services?
- What programs are available to support employees as patients or caregivers, such as workshops available through HR, vendors, and partners, or support groups?
- How can employees access support as a patient or caregiver? Who can they work within HR?

## Tools and Resources\*

### *Tools and resources to assist employers*

- Improving the Cancer Patient Experience (Your Cancer Benefits Strategy)  
[https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft\\_v9.pdf](https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft_v9.pdf)
- National Business Group on Health – Cancer Resources  
<https://www.businessgrouphealth.org/topics/disease-prevention-condition-management/cancer/>
- Example of a Caregiver Support Policy  
<https://www.acs4ccc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Caregiver-Support-Policy-v21.pdf>

### *Tools and resources for employees*

- ACS Caregivers and Family Support Information  
<https://www.Cancer.org/caregivers>



- ACS Caregiver Resource Guide (online, interactive version and downloadable PDF)  
<https://www.Cancer.org/caregiverguide>
- ACS Caregiver Support Video Series (12 Videos)  
<https://www.Cancer.org/caregivervideos>
- ACS Cancer Survivors Network®  
<https://csn.cancer.org/>
- NCI Office of Cancer Survivorship  
<https://survivorship.cancer.gov/>
- Caregivers can call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 to find respite services in their area.

### ***Additional reading***

- Supporting Caregivers in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for Employers  
[https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NEBGH-Caregiving\\_Practical-Guide-FINAL.pdf](https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NEBGH-Caregiving_Practical-Guide-FINAL.pdf)
- Employer Resource Guide: Four Steps for Supporting Employees with Caregiving Responsibilities  
<https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/home-and-family/caregiving/ReAct/employer-resource-guide.pdf>

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## Evidence-Based Practice 4: Health Insurance Coverage for Clinical Trials

Clinical research trials can help people access emerging treatments for a variety of medical conditions such as cancer. <sup>(17)</sup> You can support your employees by working with your health insurers or brokers to ensure that information about clinical trials participation is clearly explained in your health insurance benefits booklets. These documents are often the first place an employee will look for information, and they help employees to retain their privacy by removing the need to ask for personal assistance to find the information. <sup>(18)</sup>

### Implementation Options

**Collaborate with health insurers or brokers to include information in employee materials.** Work with your health insurers or brokers to include clear information about health insurance coverage during clinical trials in the employee benefits booklet or benefit summary documents.

**Communicate with employees about where to find clinical trials coverage information.** Health insurance documents can be long and confusing. Create simplified documents about clinical trials coverage or indicate where the information is located in health insurance documents, health insurers' or brokers' websites, or HR materials.

**Help employees to navigate health insurance coverage for clinical trials.** Clinical trials may be new territory for HR professionals. You may want to work with your health insurers or brokers to make sure HR staff have current benefit information, particularly leading up to open enrollment.

Specify the elements that you want your health insurers or brokers to include in employee documents, such as:

- Coverage of routine patient-care costs during participation in clinical trials
- Pre-authorization requirements such as documentation
- The appeal process for denied claims related to clinical trials participation



Work with your health insurers or brokers to learn more about coverage for clinical trials participation. They may be able to provide you with information or training about coverage.

## Tools and Resources\*

### *Tools and resources to assist employers*

- Is a Cancer Treatment Clinical Trial the Right Choice for Me? (English and Spanish) Please contact your American Cancer Society representative for more information about available materials.
- Clinical Trials: What You Need to Know (ACS)  
<https://www.cancer.org/clinicaltrials>
- Clinical Trials Videos (ACS)  
<https://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/clinical-trials/clinical-trials-videos.html>
- Summary of Affordable Care Act (ACA) Provision Requiring Insurance Coverage of Clinical Trials ( American Society of Clinical Oncology [ASCO])  
<https://www.asco.org/sites/new-www.asco.org/files/content-files/research-and-progress/documents/affordable-care-act-clinical-trials-coverage-provision.pdf>
- ACA and Coverage of Clinical Trials FAQ (ASCO)  
<https://www.asco.org/sites/new-www.asco.org/files/content-files/research-and-progress/documents/faq-clinical-trials-coverage-statute.pdf>
- Clinical Trials Information for Patients and Caregivers (NCI)  
<https://www.Cancer.gov/clinicaltrials>
- Improving the Cancer Patient Experience (Your Cancer Benefits Strategy) (Northeast Business Group on Health)  
[https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft\\_v9.pdf](https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft_v9.pdf)

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## Evidence-Based Practice 5: In-Network Coverage of Cancer Treatment at Nationally Recognized Programs/Centers

You can help your employees find the most appropriate treatment centers for their care by providing them with access to broad, in-network coverage provided by facilities that have been recognized by the *National Cancer Institute (NCI)* and the *Commission on Cancer (CoC)*. The NCI is the government's primary agency focused on cancer research and training. The CoC is a consortium that was established by the American College of Surgeons to ensure comprehensive quality cancer care for patients.

In-network coverage is particularly important in rural areas, where access to cancer treatment can be limited.<sup>(19)</sup> In addition, patients receiving care at nationally recognized facilities may have improved survivorship after their cancer diagnosis.<sup>(20)</sup>

### Implementation Options

**Select plans with in-network covered facilities.** Work with health insurers or brokers to select health insurance plans that offer broad, in-network coverage of designated facilities. Your health insurers or brokers will be familiar with the facilities covered in their networks and can help identify plans that provide the best coverage of nationally recognized treatment centers in your area.

**Navigate health insurance networks.** Communicate with employees about where to find in-network provider information. Finding health insurance coverage information for facilities can be confusing. Help employees by providing information on their health insurance network, and how to search for treatment centers.

**Provide clear information.** Clear information about in-network facilities and NCI/CoC facilities for HR professionals helps employees make informed decisions about their care, coverage, and financial responsibilities. Work with your health insurers or brokers to make sure HR staff have current network information, particularly leading up to open enrollment.



Not all states have an NCI-endorsed facility, so broad networks that include CoC-endorsed treatment centers and out-of-state NCI facilities are important for accessing high-quality cancer care. Ask your health insurers or brokers for employee-facing materials about understanding and navigating health insurance networks.

## Tools and Resources\*

- Searching for Cancer Centers (CoC)  
<https://www.facs.org/search/cancer-programs>
- Find a Cancer Center (NCI)  
<https://www.cancer.gov/research/nci-role/cancer-centers/find>

### ***Tools and resources for employees***

- A Consumer Guide to Understanding Health Plan Networks (America's Health Insurance Plans)  
<https://speier.house.gov/sites/speier.house.gov/files/ahip-interactive-consumer-guide-compressed.pdf>

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## Evidence-Based Practice 6: Communication with Employees

An ongoing practice of communicating regularly with employees helps them remember important company policy issues and service options. <sup>(21)</sup> <sup>(22)</sup>

### Implementation Options

**Support employees with healthy messaging.** You can demonstrate support for employees who are facing unexpected life events by providing clear information about your policies using some of the following methods.

- Use clear language in employee handbooks.
- Use flyers or infographics.
- Integrate policy reminders into other events. For example, integrate reminders about paid sick leave into on-site events for a flu vaccination, or integrate medical leave reminders into Colon Cancer Awareness Month programming.
- Create a culture that supports using available benefits. Managers who support the use of sick and medical leaves set an important example for other managers and employees they supervise. <sup>(6)</sup> <sup>(7)</sup> It is important to alleviate any fears employees with a cancer diagnosis or those caring for a person with cancer may have of losing their jobs by encouraging the use of available benefits.
- Remind employees of flexible work options at the time of their performance review.
- If you have employees who speak languages other than English, make sure materials are available in those languages, too.
- Listening to diverse groups of employees, considering their feedback seriously, and incorporating their feedback into action steps is an important way to reach all employees with critical health messages.



**Send reminders to employees.** As part of open enrollment, during cancer awareness programming, or as part of planned communications about how to access health insurance benefits, remind all employees about:

- The financial benefits of receiving care from in-network providers and facilities
- How to find health care providers and facilities that are in-network compared to out-of-network
- How to find health care providers and facilities covered under their health insurance plan

For privacy purposes, HR specialists and managers should avoid sending communications to specific subgroups of employees (such as to caregivers or people who have received a cancer or other medical diagnosis). Instead, include all employees in relevant communications.

## Tools and Resources\*

### *Tools and resources to assist employers*

- Improving the Cancer Patient Experience (Your Cancer Benefits Strategy) (Northeast Business Group on Health)  
[https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft\\_v9.pdf](https://nebgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CancerHuddle-draft_v9.pdf)

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