

WOMEN UNITED

Workplace Advancement Business Toolkit

GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, United Way of Greater Atlanta, and other partners are working with businesses to empower women in the workplace.



GEEARS
GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION
ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS



United Way of
Greater Atlanta

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent decades, women's participation in the workforce has dramatically increased, and this includes women with young children. According to *Child Care Aware of America*, there are **more than 5.5 million working mothers with children under age 6 in the United States and 181,673 of those work in Georgia.**¹ Two-thirds of children under age 5 in the United States have both parents or a single parent who works outside the home, and many of these children are not in high-quality child care.² Women offer diverse perspectives, and the growing number of women in the workforce has led to economic gains, but some women with children are being forced out of the workforce in part because of child care challenges. Companies with more female employees report having more job satisfaction, more organizational dedication, more meaningful work, and decreased burnout.³ Therefore, strategies to engage and retain female workers are essential for both employers and employees.

The **Women United Workplace Advancement Toolkit** offers resources and suggestions for the business community to empower their female employees by supporting the issues that impact working mothers the most. Quality, affordable child care is a business issue in more ways than one – quality early care and learning shapes and prepares the future workforce while also providing working mothers with the opportunity for economic and career success. GEEARS, United Way of Greater Atlanta, and other community partners are working with businesses to empower women in the workplace so that communities **unite and thrive**.





TWO-THIRDS of children under age 5 in the U.S. have both parents or a single parent who works outside the home, and many of these children are not in high-quality child care.²



In Georgia, child care challenges lead to at least **\$1.75 billion in losses** in economic activity annually and an additional **\$105 million in lost tax revenue**.⁵

Women are **nearly half** of the American workforce, and **mothers represent 40% of the primary breadwinners**.



There are **5,559,717** working mothers in the United States with children under age 6, and **181,673** of those are in Georgia.¹

Over a quarter of Georgia parents of children under 5 reported a significant disruption to their or a family member's employment (**quitting, not taking, or greatly changing a job**) in the past year.⁵



81% of working parents say their employer doesn't offer any kind of child care benefits, with **83% wishing they did**.⁴



There are over **200,000** single women listed as head of household in the Greater Atlanta area. And more than 40% of them live below the poverty line.

THE STRENGTH IN A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Why Women are a Benefit to the Workforce

The inclusion of women in the workforce not only widens the talent pool that businesses have to select from, but it also offers companies different perspectives and approaches across industries. Female millennials in particular are represent a significant portion of the workforce and are estimated to form approximately 25% of the global workforce by 2020.⁶

- Female millennials are more highly educated and have higher levels of workforce participation, career ambition, and career confidence than previous generations.⁶
- According to research by PwC, 86% of female millennials look for employers with a strong record on diversity.⁶
- According to research by McKinsey & Company, the most gender-diverse companies are 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability.⁷
- A report by MSCI shows that having women on the board of a company boosts productivity and an absence of women on a company's board could be perceived by investors as a talent management or workforce development concern.⁸
- Female leaders are trusted - more American workers perceive female executives as being more honest, organized and ethical than men.⁹



RACE AND ETHNICITY

Labor Force Participation of Women with Children:

76.3%

for Black mothers

69.6%

for White mothers

62.0%

for Asian mothers

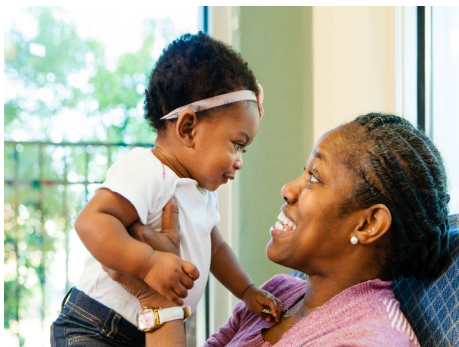
61.8%

for Hispanic mothers

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, March 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Unpublished Tabulations.

CHILD CARE: A BUSINESS ISSUE

A Two-Generation Approach



We can build a **strong workforce pipeline** for Georgia, but we **must start early**. The foundation of skills needed in school and the workforce is built during a child's first five years. Young children's brains develop more than one million new neural connections every second. These connections build the foundation upon which all future learning, behavior, and health depend. Child care is a two-generational issue and the lack of quality, affordable child care options impacts young children and their working caregivers who depend on reliable child care to participate in the workforce.

Investments in high-quality early education programs yield short- and long-term returns for Georgia. The early care and education industry generates **\$4.7 billion of economic activity** in the state each year. The availability of child care in Georgia supports annual **parental earnings of at least \$24 billion** and creates over 84,000 jobs, strengthening the workforce and contributing to the overall state economy.

Access to quality early education can help put these children on a path to success, which will have positive ramifications, not just for the children and their families, but for all Georgians.

Meeting Economic Needs, Today and Tomorrow

The availability of quality early learning improves employee productivity today and builds the foundation of skills for tomorrow's workforce. Access to high-quality affordable child care allows working parents to go to work every day and contribute to Georgia's economy.

Women employees with safe, reliable, quality child care are:

- **less likely to miss days of work** due to child care related challenges
- **able to focus on their work** without worrying about their children while they are at work.

Simultaneously, their children are gaining skills that prepare them for school, and children who start school ready to learn are more likely to perform at grade level, less likely to drop out of school, and more likely to become part of a strong workforce in the future. Their access to quality early learning can lead to higher incomes, creating a stronger consumer base.

BOOST YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Affordable Child Care is Good Business

According to *Child Care Aware of America*, the average annual cost of infant center-based care in Georgia was **\$8,327 in 2017, up from \$7,597 in 2016**. That's just about the average annual cost of college tuition in Georgia. It's easy to see how many parents feel as though high-quality child care is out of reach. **Without affordable child care, many mothers will not be able to enter, re-enter, or remain in the workforce.**

As an employer, it's important to recognize this vital need of families. You might be under the assumption that there's nothing you can do as a business owner that can reduce child care costs for your employees. With the help of federal and tax state relief, you likely have more options at your disposal than you realize:

Helping Families Find Child Care

Businesses can receive a 10 percent federal tax credit for contracting with Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, like Quality Care for Children, to help families find child care within their budget.

Child Care Resource and Referral expenditures:

- Qualified child care resource and referral expenses are amounts paid or incurred under a contract to provide child care resource and referral services to the employees of the business.
- Activities must be provided in a way that does not discriminate in favor of highly compensated individuals.
- Quality Care for Children provides referrals to quality programs as well as provides Boost Scholarships for parents in college to cover the cost of child care for eligible families. To learn more, click [here](#).



Business-Supported Options¹⁰

- **Vendor/Voucher:** Employer arranges for employee discounts using an existing local licensed child care program. To learn more, click [here](#).
- **Consortium/Shared Services Model:** Multiple companies collaborate to provide near-site care for their combined employees. Companies share in expenses and the organization/management of the off-site service.
- **On-Site Child Care:** Employers may claim a tax credit of up to 25% of the facility expenditures, plus 10% of any resource and referral expenditures in a calendar year, up to a limit of \$150,000. On-site child care availability has been shown to increase employee performance and decrease employee absenteeism.
- **Employer Supported Back-Up Child Care:** Provides subsidized back-up child care to benefit-eligible employees when unexpected circumstances arise. To learn more, click [here](#).

Offering Employees Tax-Free Payments for Child Care

Employers can set up Dependent Care Assistance Plans, which are flexible spending accounts, and enable employees to set aside up to **\$5,000 in pre-tax salary** for child care expenses ([Section 129 of the Internal Revenue Code](#)).

- Using pre-tax dollars means a tax savings to employees (potentially 20-40 percent of child care expenses depending upon the family's tax bracket and expenses incurred for child care) as well as a tax savings for employers (funds set aside through a flexible spending account reduce an employers' payroll – for example, these funds aren't subject to FICA or FUTA taxes).
- For many employees with young children, they may already be paying for child care, so the option for a flexible spending account reimburses them at a tax savings for money that would be spent anyway.
- You can read more about flexible spending accounts through [Georgia's Employee Benefit Plan Council summary](#).



EMPOWERING WOMEN TO EXCEL

The Importance of Supporting Women Employees at Every Level of Leadership

Your employees are juggling a lot, leading multifaceted lives. Working women can face a tremendous amount of stress seeking child care and fulfilling their roles as caregivers at home. Research suggests that employers that offer flexible work environments are able to **attract, motivate and retain employees, improve employee satisfaction and strengthen productivity.**

Implement Policies to Motivate and Retain Women Employees

Flexible options are especially beneficial for working mothers who are often responsible for caring for sick children or transporting children, yet many businesses have a definition of families that does not always reflect today's realities. The Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) released a study in 2016 that found that the growth of workplace flexibility has stabilized in recent years. The study of over 900 employers with 50 or more employees found the following:

- **Parental leave:** some kind of paid or unpaid maternity leave is offered by 93 percent of workplaces, up from 79 percent in 2005; 76 percent of workplaces offer some kind of spouse-partner leave, up from 71 percent in 2005.
- **Telecommuting/flex place:** offered by 66 percent of workplaces, up slightly from 63 percent in 2012.
- **Flex-time:** offered by 81 percent of workplaces, up from 77 percent in 2012.
- **Career counseling for women:** offered by 15 percent of workplaces, down from 22 percent in 2005.
- **Time off when important needs arise:** offered by 81 percent of workplaces, down from 87 percent in 2012.
- **Employee wellness programs:** offered by 61 percent of workplaces, down slightly from 63 percent in 2012.
- **Employee Assistance Plans (EAPs) that help employees address problems and pressures that might negatively impact their work:** offered by 75 percent of workplaces, consistent with the percentage from 2012.
- **Private spaces for breastfeeding:** offered by 79 percent of workplaces, consistent with the percentage from 2012.

Workplace flexibility is about rethinking how, when, and where people do their best work to promote work and family balance and happy, healthy, families. See [SHRM's 10 Strategy Checklist](#) to help you implement flex policies.

Implement and Enforce a Strong Sexual Harassment Policy

Employers should not only have a strong sexual harassment policy in place but also implement the policy and make it easily accessible for employees. A [2016 Harvard Business Review study](#) found that sexual harassment continues to be an issue working women face, and that 71 percent of women do not report sexual harassment they personally experience. The study found that women often fail to report sexual harassment when they are victims or witnesses for three common reasons:

- **Fear of retaliation:** women may not report sexual harassment out of fear of retaliation by their harasser or their company.
- **The bystander effect:** women may fail to report sexual harassment they witness because others are around and it may appear as acceptable behavior or they may assume someone else will report or correct the harassing behavior.
- **Masculine culture:** in majority-male companies, male-led companies, or companies with an extreme masculine culture, women are more likely to join in sexual harassment or inappropriate behavior in order to fit in or adapt to their surroundings.

Researchers estimate that sexual harassment costs organizations \$22,500 a year in lost productivity for each employee affected.¹¹

Beyond having a written statement about your organization's commitment to maintaining a harassment-free environment for all employees, it is important to foster a safe and appropriate work environment. [Integrity HR](#) suggests the following seven steps for preventing workplace harassment:

1. Create a **strong sexual harassment policy**
2. Encourage **consensual agreement forms** for office romances
3. Never laugh at or encourage **inappropriate jokes**
4. Keep your office parties and meetings **"PG" Rated**
5. Ensure that all upper-level employees attend **anti-harassment workshops**
6. Respond to sexual harassment complaints **right away**
7. Prevent **retaliation**



Support women in seeking mentors and serving as mentors for other women

- A 2017 study by professional services firm [Egon Zehnder](#) found that only 54% of women have access to senior leaders who act as mentors or informal sponsors in their career.
- As women excel in their careers, establishing professional guidance and support can boost women's careers and increase their performance for your organization.
- Encourage your women employees to get involved with mentorship by following the steps listed [here](#).

Talk With Me Baby @ Work

Your business can make an impact on Georgia's young children by hosting a **Talk With Me Baby @ Work workshop** for your employees. At no cost, Hands On Atlanta will facilitate three interactive sessions for parents and caregivers focused on the importance of early childhood literacy.

- Sessions provide engaging conversations about why talking with your baby is critical and tools and tips on how to interact with children 0-5 to increase their language development.
- Talk With Me Baby @ Work is for parents, caregivers, grandparents, or expecting parents.
- Companies can use Talk With Me Baby @ Work as an employee benefit, supporting the recruitment, engagement and retention of employees, and to bolster their internal and external reputation. There will be no cost to your business to host these sessions.
- For more information or to host a workshop, click [here](#).

Get Recognized

Organizations interested in showcasing their flexibility strategies, benchmarking with others, or learning more about work flex should apply for the prestigious 'When Work Works' award, sponsored by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Families and Work Institute (FWI).



Be a Resource for Your Employees

- **Refer** working parents to Quality Care for Children and Quality Rated for assistance in finding child care. Call 1-877-ALL-GA-KIDS or visit www.qualityrated.org to conduct an online search.
- **Post signs or flyers** with links to Quality Care for Children's resources where employees regularly gather, such as the copy machine or break room.
- Provide a flyer about Quality Rated and Quality Care for Children in **new hire packets**.
- **Connect** relocating employees with Quality Care for Children.
- **Contract** with Quality Care for Children for enhanced referrals.
 - There is a federal tax credit for businesses that contract with Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies to assist their employees with finding child care. **Employers can receive a tax credit of up to 10 percent of expenses for CCR&R services.**
- **Refer** employees to VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program, a free program offering IRS-trained tax preparers with special emphasis on ensuring important tax credits such as Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Education Credits are received by every eligible person.
- **Refer** employees to **United Way of Greater Atlanta's 2-1-1 Contact Center** to connect families with community-based resources they need to thrive – resources that can put food on tables, sharpen and edit resumes, keep lights on or even provide clothes after a house fire. This help is provided so that families can keep moving forward.



SIMPLE STEPS THAT BUSINESSES CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT WORKING MOTHERS

- **For New Hire Packets and Employee Handbooks:** Download [this one page resource](#) to include in orientation sessions, new hire packets, and/or employee handbooks, which includes information about Quality Care for Children and helpful tips in searching for child care.
- Post information about Quality Care for Children's services near the copy machine, the coffee machine, or in the break room. Download [this flyer](#) that includes both information about Quality Care for Children and links for information about available scholarships for low-income families.

If your Human Resources Department has a resource area for employees (or digital employee resource area on a company website), **post links to or print these documents:**

- [Boosting Your Child Care Vocabulary](#) (i.e., understanding the terms that are used, the types of care available, and other helpful resources in finding child care)
- [Child Care Tax Incentives to Make Employee Child Care More Affordable](#)
- [Employee Workplace Harassment Prevention Toolkit](#)
- [Georgia's Quality Rated Child Care Program](#)
- [Key Questions to Ask Child Care Providers](#)



OTHER RESOURCES

- [U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Leading the Way: A Guide for Business Engagement in Early Education](#)
- [Information about Georgia's Quality Rated Child Care programs](#)
- [Information about Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services \(CAPS\) scholarship program](#)
- [Workplace Flexibility Infographic](#)
- [Fair Work Schedules](#)
- [More about "When Work Works"](#)
- [Steps to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#)
- [The Business Case for Early Education Investments](#)



SOURCES

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¹⁰ Melinda Ennis-Roughton “The Case for Employer Supported Child Care,” (PowerPoint) Family Connection – Glynn County, January 2018.

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