

The Power of Peace of Mind

Elevate your employee's well-being
with advance care planning

FIVE
WISHES[®]

at Work

When we're facing an unexpected health crisis – or helping a loved one navigate it – our lives are deeply affected, and that naturally spills over into our working life.

Though we don't like to think about it, a change in health or an accident can happen to any of us. Yet, most of us don't plan for it. In fact, many of us put more thought and planning into a vacation than into our wishes regarding care in the event of a serious illness or accident.

Whether we're facing our own sudden challenges or helping a loved one navigate care, a health crisis can be all-consuming.

Six in 10 adults have a chronic disease, and four in 10 have two or more chronic diseases.

Chronic diseases now touch every demographic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines a chronic disease as a condition that lasts one year or more and requires ongoing medical attention or limits daily living activities, or both. Today, six in 10 adults have a chronic disease, and four in 10 have two or more chronic diseases.ⁱ With obesity on the rise, those numbers will continue to grow.

Role of the workplace in wellness

Employers know the health and well-being of employees contributes significantly to the quality of their job performance. Employers also want to keep expenses manageable to ensure the business is successful and profitable.

Many workplaces offer wellness program designed to promote health and prevent disease. Almost half of HR professionals surveyed by the Society for Human Resource Management said wellness initiatives in their workplace have decreased their company's health care costs. About two-fifths said wellness initiatives decreased unplanned absences, and about a third said those initiatives increased work productivity.ⁱⁱ

But health challenges go beyond the physical and mental well-being of the individual employees themselves. The Family Caregiver Alliance, a nonprofit research and policy organization that supports caregivers, estimates 17% of full-time workers are acting as caregivers for loved ones. That can put a strain on an employee's work as well. The stress of holding a job while caring for a loved one can take a toll on a caregiver's physical and emotional health, which can naturally impact job performance.ⁱⁱⁱ

Caregiver absenteeism costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$25.2 billion in lost productivity, with 24% of caregivers saying that caring for a loved one directly impacts their performance at work.^{iv}

Each of these situations leads to increased costs to employers and, often, additional health and wellness challenges for the employees serving as caregivers. As the number of people in the “sandwich generation” grows – people caring for young and elderly loved ones simultaneously – these numbers are likely to rapidly increase.

Consider This^v

- 61% of caregivers experience at least one change in their employment due to caregiving, such as cutting back work hours, taking a leave of absence or receiving a warning about performance or attendance.
- 49% of caregivers arrive to their workplace late/leave early or take time off.
- 15% take a leave of absence.
- 14% reduce their hours or take a demotion.
- 6% give up working entirely.

No one wants to be in the difficult position of having to guess what kind of treatment a loved one would want or not want, and everyone wants to feel as though they honored their loved one’s choices. When resources are available to help employees proactively think through how they would navigate the care associated with serious accidents or chronic illnesses – for themselves or a loved one –some of the stressful decision-making related to these situations is eliminated. This is a tremendous benefit to the employees and the employer.

Shifting demographics, changing needs

Workplace demographics are constantly shifting. Two newer trends are causing wellness and well-being issues to climb higher on the list of workplace priorities and needs. First, the rate of baby boomers retiring, making room for younger employees, means more workers may fall into that “sandwich generation” demographic. And with a growing number of older workers delaying retirement, employees likely are facing more age-related health challenges of their own.

Organizations using a broad range of benefits as a strategic tool for recruiting and retaining talent report better overall company performance and above-average effectiveness in recruitment and retention. And peace of mind is an enormous benefit.^{vi}

The Society for Human Resource Management’s most recent workplace forecast found that 63% of HR professionals said the number of employees with caring responsibilities will have a major impact on the workplace over the next five years.^{vii}

The number of people 65 and older is projected to double between 2000 and 2030 in the U.S., and two-thirds of people in this age group will experience multiple, chronic illnesses.

Offering the benefit of an advance directive to help employees think through care needs before confronting a health emergency – for themselves or a loved one – is a proactive way employers can contribute to the well-being of their employees.

Demand for palliative services will continue to grow. The number of people 65 and older is projected to double between 2000 and 2030 in the U.S.,^{viii} and two-thirds of people in this age group will experience multiple, chronic illnesses. When you consider this, coupled with the fact that 92% of people would consider palliative care for loved ones with a serious disease, the demand for advance care planning is expected to skyrocket over the next decade.

Absenteeism and presenteeism

Business leaders and HR professionals know the cost of absenteeism. When an employee is too unwell to work, there is lost productivity. Increasingly, employers also are finding that when workers are dealing with the caregiving needs of loved ones, they're distracted and often absent as well, which costs businesses money.

The ancillary affect is the caregiver-employee's own health suffers as well. Absenteeism due to unexpected health challenges can drive up costs.

Increasingly, though, presenteeism is coming at a cost to employers as well. Presenteeism is when employees report to work when they are ill, overly fatigued, or for other reasons aren't operating at their usual level of productivity.

Employees in a recent Virgin Pulse Global Challenge study averaged four sick days a year but indicated the time they lost while on the job — present, but not working productively — added up to a staggering 57.5 days per year per employee.^{ix}

When employers can create a work environment that encourages mental and physical well-being and supports employees who need to support loved ones who are unwell, everyone benefits.

Workplace wellness programs designed to promote health and prevent disease are becoming increasingly important. From obesity to arthritis, diabetes to heart disease, no age group is immune to these challenges. And the mental health benefit that comes from stress reduction supports employees' physical wellbeing too.

But wellness programs can be bigger than walking clubs, mindful yoga breaks and nutrition seminars.

Wellness is also about the peace of mind that comes from knowing our loved ones' wishes before they're unable to communicate them.

Wellness is also about the peace of mind that comes from knowing our loved ones' wishes before they're unable to communicate them. It's why employers are seeking ways to help employees take some of the mystery out of the stress that comes with an unexpected health crisis.

Peace of mind for your employees

Those who have experienced navigating a serious illness or injury with a loved one know how taxing the process can be. There are so many things they wish they knew — about the health care system, about their loved one's wishes, about taking care of themselves. Advance care planning takes some of the guesswork out of a time packed with unknowns.

Studies show people who think through and plan for their own care in case of health emergency make healthier choices today. That's why it's important for all of us — regardless of our age or health — to talk with our families and loved ones about what kind of care we would want if we ever become too sick to speak for ourselves.

Five Wishes at Work is an employee health incentive program that offers peace of mind to your staff and to you. It is a turnkey package that has helped millions of people talk about advance care planning.

96% would strongly recommend Five Wishes to their HR colleagues

In a survey of employers who provide Five Wishes at Work to their employees, 96% said they would strongly recommend *Five Wishes* to their HR colleagues, with 93% saying it is a useful tool for employees. And, 90% said they felt offering Five Wishes at Work was appreciated by employees.

Nine in 10 employers said their workers were happy to have the information, and three-quarters reported "very positive" employee reactions to receiving the *Five Wishes* materials.

When goals of care are put in writing using the *Five Wishes* advance directive, employers save money from less absenteeism and turnover, fewer unwanted ICU visits and shorter hospital stays. Quite simply, it's an investment in a benefit for your employees that pays dividends to you as well.

Five Wishes at Work includes the national standard in advance directives — *Five Wishes*, which has helped more than 35 million people talk about advance care planning with their loved ones. It legally documents the most important things to talk about when it comes to advance care planning.

The Five Wishes at Work program includes the following:

Employee Packages

- Two Five Wishes advance directives
- One Conversation Guide for Individuals and Families
- Customized packaging with a letter from your organization detailing your commitment to employees' wellness

Support & Internal Marketing Materials

- Implementation guide
- Telephone support for your implementation team and employees
- Online dashboard to access articles and information for internal marketing
- Presenter's Guide and customizable PowerPoint for team meetings
- Promotional flyers and infographics on the value of advance care planning and caregiver issues
- Tools to assist in engaging your community in advance care planning
- Sample program launch communications and calendar

Five Wishes at Work enhances the well-being component that's essential to a wellness program. It offers peace of mind and has helped thousands of employers ensure employees and their families get the care they want – or avoid care they don't want. Employers who offer advance care planning have seen a reduction in unwanted health care costs while increasing trust and productivity throughout their organizations.

Dollar for dollar, Five Wishes at Work offers an excellent return on your employee benefits and wellness investment.

Todd Scott, director of human resources for Battery Systems, Inc., said the Five Wishes at Work document provides a direct ethical benefit of a calming force for families because it clearly communicates decisions made, and it outlines the advocates who will help carry them out.

"The peace available through the *Five Wishes* document cannot be understated," he said.

"And, on a practical level, the advance directive affords the opportunity for employees – and, by extension, employers – to be shielded from costly, unwanted and even needless medical interventions. It's a true benefit for your employees' families as well as the entire group medical plan."

Employers who offer advance care planning have seen a reduction in unwanted health care costs while increasing trust and productivity throughout their organizations.

"I have wanted to offer this benefit for several years to our group. Within our culture, we have blended the concepts of wellness, health and safety into one concept, which has afforded us many gains. One of these gains is the open door to discuss many of the challenges life offers."

Todd Scott, director of human resources for Battery Systems, Inc

Employers consistently praise the program because for just pennies a day per employee, it's a low-cost, easy, culturally aware way to build trust and retention with their team. It's available in 29 languages to address diverse cultures and needs. And because of the simplicity of the document's language, it's almost four times more likely to be used by people than the state forms

With Five Wishes at Work, you'll increase productivity and decrease unwanted health expenses. That's a benefit everyone can get behind.

For more information on how advance care planning can be a benefit to your team, contact *Five Wishes* at FWW@FiveWishes.org or call 888-5-WISHES (888-594-7437).

End Notes

ⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Retrieved June 6, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/tools/infographics.htm>

ⁱⁱ Society for Human Resource Management, "Workplace Forecast," May 2013

ⁱⁱⁱ Family Caregiver Alliance: "[Caregiver Statistics: Work and Caregiving](#)"

^{iv} Gallup Healthways: "[Caregiving Costs U.S. Economy \\$25.2 Billion in Lost Productivity](#)"

^v Family Caregiver Alliance: "[Caregiver Statistics: Work and Caregiving](#)"

^{vi} Society for Human Resources Management, "2018 Employee Benefits Report," Retrieved June 7, 2019, from <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/pages/2018-employee-benefits.aspx>

^{vii} Society for Human Resource Management, "Workplace Forecast," May 2013

^{viii} U.S. Census 2010 report: "The Next Four Decades," Retrieved June 7, 2019, from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2010pubs/p25-1138.pdf>

^{ix} Virgin Pulse Global Challenge: "Clocking in and Checking Out: Why Your Employees May Not Be Working at Optimal Levels and What You Can Do About It," Retrieved June 7, 2019, from <https://gccmarketing.blob.core.windows.net/marketing-site/marketo/resources/presenteeism/us-presenteeism-whitepaper.pdf>

Five Wishes is a program of Aging With Dignity, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1996, to safeguard and affirm the dignity of every person who faces the challenges of serious illness, disability, or loneliness. More than 35 million families and 40,000 organizations have used our resources to discuss advance care planning.



FiveWishes.org | 850-681-2010