Many parents are currently struggling to balance job and family responsibilities. Such attempts bring about changes in work and individual attitudes. This report presents the status of work and family in 1992, as well as the nature and direction of workplace changes to accommodate families. The report indicates that large United States companies have begun meeting the work-family needs of employed women and men, though most in piecemeal fashion. The report analyzes the status of the development of work-family initiative programs and identifies the steps needed and criteria for maintaining and improving such programs. The paper discusses different approaches to offering such programs, time and leave flexibility, costs of work-family problems, financial status of work-family initiatives, the extension of initiatives to new constituencies such as emergency child care and school-age care, and the creation of collaborations, and ways of changing the culture of the workplace. The report concludes by noting that it is difficult to be family supportive because of differences in race, income, education, and attitudes. However, it is crucial to provide family-supportive programs for the sake of families and a productive work force. Contains 26 references. (MOK)
In 1980, when I began my first work-family research project and people would ask me what kind of work I did, my response required a long explanation. The terminology work and family had no name recognition. Twelve years later, there is absolutely no confusion. The statement that I conduct research on work and family life issues usually prompts a personal story of feeling torn by too much to do and not enough time.

It is not surprising that the concept of work and family has become well established in public consciousness. There have been years of regular media attention to these issues. Even the presidential contenders and their wives talk about tag team parenting and the strains of balancing job and family responsibilities.

As a result, the perception of who is responsible when people have work-family difficulties is changing. Fewer people think, "It's completely my fault—if only I read the right books...if only I knew the right time management techniques.” Likewise, fewer people think that "I'm the only one with these problems: at other people's houses, they are putting a homecooked dinner on the table, and I'm the only one with no food in the refrigerator.”

It is also more widely understood that work-family problems are a result of families changing faster than institutions—than the workplace with its last minute meetings or mandatory overtime, than the schools that provide little warning of events that parents are expected to attend, than doctors or dentists who don't have evening hours, or than banks that close at three o'clock.

The guilt and strain of trying "to do it all to have it all" are, however, beginning to result in changed attitudes. Polls on the work ethic are for the first time revealing...
that a majority of employed parents do not want to live such pressured lives. A recent survey, conducted by the Hilton Corporation, stated that about two-thirds of Americans would prefer to take a salary reduction in order to get more time off.\footnote{1}

Paralleling the change in individual attitudes, there is also a gradual change occurring in the awareness and responsiveness of companies to employees' work and family concerns. In this status report on work and family in 1992, I will describe the nature and direction of these workplace changes.

• Some work-family assistance exists in all large companies, but most companies have a limited or piecemeal approach.

In the study of the largest companies in 30 industries for our recent book, *The Corporate Reference Guide to Work-Family Programs*, and in other studies, the Families and Work Institute has been able to benchmark in several ways just how far large United States' companies have come in meeting the work-family needs of employed women and men. First, we could define distinct stages of development for work-family initiatives and tabulate the numbers of companies in each stage. We found:

• 33% are in Pre-Stage I, with few policies, and management resistant or barely aware of the issues.

• 46% are in Stage I, with several policies but not a packaged response; work-family is seen mainly as a women's issue with a focus on child care.

• 19% are in Stage II, with an integrated approach to meeting the work-family needs of employees.

• 2% are in Stage III, with a focus that has moved beyond programs toward changing the company culture to be more family-friendly as well as toward community intervention.
It is in Stage II and Stage III that companies review their existing time and leave policies to try to provide greater flexibility. It is also in these stages that management realizes that while their company may have excellent time-off programs, such programs might as well not exist if supervisors measure employee commitment primarily by the number of hours employees spend on the job, classifying those who use flexible time and leave policies as "not serious about their jobs." In fact, at one of the most progressive U.S. companies, 52% of the employees reported that they believed taking advantage of the company's time and leave programs would jeopardize their jobs or careers. In response to such realizations, companies have instituted management training programs to change attitudes and to teach skills in handling work-family issues productively. Ten percent of large companies now offer work-family management training to supervisors.

Another way we benchmarked progress was to develop the FWI Family-Friendly Index, a tool that scores the prevalence and quality of business work-family initiatives. The top score that a company can receive on the Index is 610. The highest score in our sample of 188 large corporations (as of 1990) was 245. We calculate that a solid and integrated set of programs and policies would yield a score of 385.

The prevalence of programs is often a factor of company size. In The Corporate Reference Guide study, we found that all large companies provided at least one work-family program (paid disability leave) and 55% offered child care assistance. In another study of a representative sample of employers of all sizes in four states (Minnesota, Rhode Island, Oregon, and Wisconsin), we found that 10% of companies with fewer than 1,000 employees provided child care assistance.
• Despite its prevalence, few companies offer time and leave flexibility or are truly family-friendly.

Studies of employee populations, company by company,* conducted by Families and Work Institute, reveal that the kind of assistance employed parents most desire is greater time flexibility. They want to take leaves to be with a new baby or sick child, to be late without censure if there is a child care problem or their child has trouble separating in the morning, to be able to attend a school play or teacher’s conference, or to be able to take an elderly parent to the doctor.5

Most large companies do have time-off policies. For example, 77% offer flextime, allowing employees some discretion in the times they arrive at and leave work, as long as they accumulate the required number of hours per day or per week. However, only 45% of these programs are written into company policy and only one-fourth are available company wide. Likewise, while 100% of these firms have disability leaves for childbirth, only 28% have policies providing time-off for mothers beyond the disability period. Such leaves ... e offered to fathers in just 22% of the companies and to adoptive parents in 23%. Furthermore, only 16% permit the use of their leave policies for the care of sick children or other family members.6

Similarly, we estimate that only one in seven companies of all sizes have formal or informal time-off policies meeting the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act that passed Congress in 1992, and is expected to be sent to President Bush this fall.7

* A study in progress at Families and Work Institute will determine if time flexibility is most desired by a nationally representative sample of the United States workforce.
The research that undergirds these programs is beginning to document the costs of work-family problems as well as the benefits of the solutions.

Most of the research to date on the cost of not addressing work-family problems has been focused on child care. It has identified the following problems:

(1) Difficulty finding child care: the research indicates that difficulty finding out about and obtaining child care is a major predictor of parents’ absenteeism.8

(2) Difficulty maintaining child care: workers who have to make last-minute, ad hoc arrangements have higher rates of absenteeism and tardiness, are more likely to spend unproductive time on the job, and are also prone to higher levels of stress and more stress-related health problems that those without such child care problems.9

(3) Difficulty paying for child care: a national study reveals that poor families pay proportionately more for child care—23% of their family income compared to 6% for higher-income families.10 The lack of affordable child care leads many employed parents to settle for patchwork arrangements that can disrupt their productivity.

(4) Coping with sick children: in the National Child Care Survey 1990, 35% of employed mothers reported that their children were sick within the preceding month. Of these, 51% stayed home to care for their children.11

Research on the benefits of on-site child care reveals notable differences between assumptions about how employer-supported child care affects productivity and its actual effects. The primary benefit of an employer-sponsored child care center appears to be reduced turnover and improved recruitment,12 but managers13 and center users14 are more likely to believe that morale and absenteeism are the greatest benefits. The Families and Work Institute has a study in process assessing the costs and benefits of an on-site center that includes care for mildly ill children. It is very plausible that when a company addresses the sick child care issue, absenteeism will decrease.
Research on flextime has shown that the degree of flexibility offered makes the greatest difference in whether it reduces work-family conflict and stress for employed parents and leads toward more family time. Flextime has also been shown to provide a return to the company through reductions in tardiness and absenteeism and improvements in morale. Since the costs of implementing flextime are so low, little change is needed to show a return on investment.

Several studies have shown that pregnant women who work for companies with accommodating policies are more likely to return to their jobs. Cost/benefit analyses have likewise shown it is cheaper to provide a leave than to replace the employee. A study conducted by Marra and Lindner to be published by Families and Work Institute this fall reveals that it costs 32% of an employee's yearly salary to provide a leave, whereas it costs between 75% and 150% of the salary to replace the employee.

- Work-family initiatives were not halted by the recession.

Many people have questioned whether the current recession would slow or stop work-family initiatives. Instead, although actual implementation of these programs may have slowed, corporate interest has continued to grow, even during these hard economic times.

A survey of 170 companies, conducted by The Conference Board in mid-1991, found that only 2% of respondents had cut work-family programs more than other Human Resource programs. Sixty percent had enhanced their work-family programs during the past recessionary year, and nearly half (47%) of companies' work-family programs were expanded more than other Human Resource programs.

A finding from The Corporate Reference Guide supports this notion. In conducting statistical analyses to determine the predictors of corporate involvement
in family-responsive programs, we found that the experiences of a merger or of downsizing were associated with being more family-friendly, as measured by Families and Work Institute's Family-Friendly Index.

Interestingly, more than seven out of ten employers interviewed for The Corporate Reference Guide, stated that their companies would not develop work-family programs during a period of business change, yet our results belie this assumption. The discrepancy between employers’ perceptions and the statistical findings can be partially explained by timing. While a company is first undergoing a downsizing, a merger, or a business downturn, it may become lean and mean. However, many employers soon recognize that they have to do something to improve the morale of the employees who remain. This phenomenon has led us to term work-family assistance a survivor benefit.

• Next steps include extending initiatives to new constituencies and creating collaborations.

Companies are extending their child care initiatives into emergency child care and school-age care. For example, a few companies are building emergency centers (The Chase Manhattan Corporation; Goldman, Sachs, & Co.; Time Warner, Inc.), while others are creating collaborations such as Emergency Child Care Services (ECCS), a service, developed by fifteen companies in New York City to provide and subsidize in-home care when children are sick.

In this decade, creative programs will be developed to provide before and after-school care as well as summer and vacation care. Since many current school-age initiatives lose children between eight- and ten-years-old because the programs are seen as "too babyish," some companies (for example, Corning) are beginning to develop more age-appropriate programs for older children. This strategy dovetails nicely with another corporate concern: developing science, math, and literary skills.
in the future workforce. In addition, a growing number of companies subscribe to a national hotline where parents can get help with their school-age children's homework issues.

Elder care is another growth area. In The Corporate Reference Guide study, almost one-fourth of the companies surveyed reported that they are planning to institute Elder Care Consultation and Referral, a service which provides information, personal consultation, and referrals to community-based services for the elderly. This service and the provision of long term care insurance have remained the staple responses to elder care. Surprisingly, there has been little innovative thinking in the development of other business programs to assist employees with elder care concerns. Considering the numbers of employees who are expect to assume these responsibilities in the 1990s (possibly up to 40% of the workforce), one can expect to see more thoughtful attention to elder care in the coming decade.

This fall's announcement of the American Business Collaborative for Quality Dependent Care (ABC) also heralds a new trend in the work-family field. Over a dozen companies—that normally compete with each other—have joined together in several communities to spend tens of millions of dollars to develop far ranging solutions to their employees' dependent care needs. The companies include IBM, which has spearheaded this initiative, Johnson & Johnson, NationsBank, AT&T, Allstate Insurance Company, Eastman Kodak Company and others. The word quality in the title of this effort is crucially important. Recent national studies on the supply and demand of child care indicate that while the supply of child care has increased dramatically over the last twenty-five years, cost has remained flat and quality has declined. Furthermore, the regulations governing the 1990 Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) hampers states' ability to develop initiatives that improve quality. The ABC collaboration indicates that the
corporate community, aware of how much it has to lose by a poorly prepared workforce, is taking up the banner of quality. In doing so, the corporate community seems to be saying that if the government will not provide safeguards and quality assurances for their employees' children, they will!

Other next steps revolve around trying to change the culture of the workplace to make it more family-friendly.

Work-family management training efforts will continue but will also change. It is becoming increasingly clear to leading companies that four hours of training cannot change a culture. In the future, one can expect to see training elaborated beyond one session and broadened to include the development of flexibility guidelines, communication efforts, and even changing performance appraisal systems to include how well the supervisor handles the work-family concerns of his or her subordinates.

One of the problems with current work-family management training efforts is their lack of coordination with company diversity programs. Double messages abound. Diversity programs emphasize breaking the glass ceiling and developing the careers of employees. As such, their messages emphasize moving onto the fast track. In contrast, work-family messages emphasize balance, even taking time off. When these two conflictual messages are given, employees feel safer listening to the those that promote developing their careers, especially in a period of a business downturn.

One of the tasks of Stage III is to begin trying to reconcile these two corporate initiatives with each other, as well as with the quality initiatives companies have begun. It is not a simple matter to do so, however, because different department and different constituencies are involved, and turf issues are often raised. Will work-family come under diversity initiatives? Will these two areas begin to collaborate
more, and if so, how? All these issues are expected to be dealt with in the coming decade.

- **Work will be redefined in the coming decade.**

  Dana Friedman, Co-President of Families and Work Institute, and I are often asked to speculate on what Stage IV will be. We see it as revolving around redefining work. As the *anytime, anyplace office* becomes more commonplace (faxes and computer in the home, phones in cars), and as the United States moves toward an information-based economy, boundaries between work and family will become even more diffuse. Standards for measuring performance are expected to hinge less on presence (the number of hours one works equals commitment and productivity) and more on results. In addition, the recession has led to reductions in middle management, greater reliance on team approaches and different paths for promotions, including more lateral moves. These preconditions are ideal for the insertion of work-family concerns. At the present time, however, the leaders discussing the workplace of the future are not thinking of these issues. And it is always possible, given technology, that the workplace will continue to demand more work over longer hours, as described in the new bestseller, *The Overworked American.*

  As promising and exciting as the emergence of business involvement in work-family issues has been, it has prompted four concerns.

  • **A concern: corporations alone cannot solve societal problems.**

    The conservative political agenda holds that government should do less and that private enterprise should play the major role in resolving social problems. This argument is being played out in the push toward parental choice, vouchers, and for-profit schools. It also underlies the move toward the business community taking
the lead in resolving the aftermath of the Los Angeles riots. Likewise, there are some who feel it is up to the business community, without governmental strictures, to provide parental leave, to promote quality in child care, and to offer supports for employees struggling with work-family responsibilities. If one looks, however, at the communities with the strongest business response to work-family and child care problems, these are the communities in which government has built the strongest infrastructure. Companies are less likely to invest in community services that are of very poor quality. Thus, government involvement is a precondition to business activity.

- A concern: the involvement of business has the potential to widen the gap between the haves and the have nots.

If one notes the companies named in this article as being the most family-friendly, it is immediately apparent that the most responsive companies are the companies that employ the most privileged workers. Not surprisingly, an analysis of the predictors of family-responsiveness in the four state study conducted by Families and Work Institute revealed that larger companies and companies with a higher number of professional employees were the most likely to be family-friendly. Thus, those who are helped most by business involvement are the haves—employees who work for companies that provide good salaries and benefits—and those who are not helped are the have nots—employees who work for small employers, with lower salaries, and fewer, if any, benefits. Work-family assistance could have the unintended effect of creating a larger distance between social classes.
• A concern: companies are more likely to provide work supports than family supports.

Most of the assistance of business has been aimed at reducing the obstacles to employees coming to work. Child care and elder care resource and referral, financial assistance in paying for dependent care services, emergency child care programs, and parenting seminars at the workplace all attempt to reduce the stress of family responsibilities so that employees can be as productive as possible. These are, in effect, work supports, because they enable employers to get the most from their workforce. This is, of course, a very important function, but from a family perspective, it is worrisome that there is much less attention to the provision of family supports, programs and policies that enable employees to spend time with their families.

An interesting corollary concerns the name of my organization, Families and Work Institute, so named because we believe that families must come first. Typically, however, most people put work first, calling us the Work and Family Institute.

• A final concern: it is difficult to be family supportive.

In other studies, we have investigated the predictors of being family supportive, looking at the relationships between parents and their children's child care teachers. We have found numerous obstacles. For example, we have found that differences of race, income, and education between parents and staff are predictive of poorer relationships between them. Likewise, we have found that attitudinal difference are important. Teachers who believe that mothers shouldn't work (and one in four feel this way) are less likely to be supportive of employed parents.

All of this is to say that change is not easy. It requires altering attitudes as well as behavior, and that takes time. It is hard, in corporate parlance, to walk the talk. But it is crucially important to do so for the sake of families today and tomorrow.\(^{26}\)
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