

Work and Family Events Raise Questions and Offer Solutions

Devising strategies to meet the challenges of work-family conflict requires rethinking some common assumptions—that work-family issues are of concern to women only, that employer and employee interests necessarily collide, and that families, employers, and in some cases government, are the only essential actors. In fact, male employees too face conflicts in managing family and work responsibilities. Workplace flexibility policies that make it easier for employees to meet their family care responsibilities have been shown to benefit employers as well. And other sectors of society, such as preschools, schools, health care providers, and other community organizations can help address work-family challenges by, for example, changing the hours they are open or providing more coordination of care.

Over the last month, a series of work and family events have addressed these assumptions and offered strategies to improve work-family balance in the United States. Many of the events featured authors from the *Future of Children (FOC)* [Work and Family](#) volume; all provided the volume as a resource to attendees.

The first event, WorldatWork's Congressional briefing on October 18, 2011, focused on the increasing work-family challenges facing men today. The event featured Ellen Galinsky, FOC [Work and Family](#) author and President of the Families and Work Institute, Kathie Lingle of WorldatWork's Alliance for Work-Life Progress, and Dr. Brad Harrington of Boston College's Center on Work & Family. As Lingle commented, "men and women in the U.S. are equally likely to see their identities in the same way. And both are more home-identified than work-identified." How do we address evolving challenges for men's work-family balance? Check out Ellen Galinsky's [commentary](#) on the event for more on this question.

Shortly after the Congressional briefing, the Center for American Progress (CAP), with FOC [Work and Family](#) author and CAP senior economist Heather Boushey, hosted an event, co-sponsored by [Half in Ten](#) and the [National Partnership for Women & Families](#), focused on expanding sick days coverage. *The Future of Children's* [Work and Family](#) volume recommends that a minimal amount of paid sick leave be provided to workers. The status quo, whereby the lowest-paid workers are least likely to have paid sick leave or other leave that enables them to take care of family responsibilities, forces working parents to choose between not taking care of their family or losing their wages (or losing their job altogether).

This past spring, Connecticut passed S.B. 913, the Paid Sick Leave bill, which made the state the country's first to pass a law requiring paid sick days for service employees. Panelists argued that the law promotes increases in health, cuts business costs by reducing risks associated with employees coming to work while sick, garners bi-partisan support, and is not abused by employees. Click [here](#) for more information on the event at the Center for American Progress.

Finally, two November events raised critical questions about workplace flexibility strategies that work. The National Association of Mothers' Centers Annual Work/Life Conference on November 4, 2011, explored the impact of technology on work and life, as well as impact-driven human resource policies and work-life strategies. The Families and Work Institute and the Society of Human Resource Management's Work-Life Focus 2012 and Beyond conference on November 8-10, 2011 looked at workplace effectiveness strategies that work, highlighting findings from the Families and Work Institute's [When Work Works](#) program.

For more information on the best research to date on work-family balance in the United States, go to the *Future of Children's* [Work and Family](#) volume.