



Preparing Metropolitan Chicago for the 21st Century

NEWS RELEASE

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AREA BUSINESSES CAN BECOME MORE COMPETITIVE BY HELPING EMPLOYEES MEET CRITICAL CHILDCARE NEEDS

Chicago Metropolis 2020 has released a comprehensive handbook explaining a wide range of "best practices" that some area employers use to help working parents care for their children and that simultaneously help the businesses become more competitive.

Childcare Solutions for Your Employees, a handbook of best practices, describes how family-friendly programs at the workplace can improve a business' bottom line and explains the challenges to making these programs successful.

"The continued expansion of our region's economy depends on many factors, including our ability to recruit and retain skilled workers," said Andrew J. McKenna, Chairman of Chicago Metropolis 2020. "Because more and more members of the nation's workforce are single parents or come from dual income families, businesses and the region can maintain a competitive edge by responding with childcare programs, flexible hours, parenting seminars and other supportive programs."

Employers using the handbook will find a menu of options including how to begin an on-site childcare center for children of employees; how to help employees find affordable childcare near the job or near their homes; how to collaborate with other companies or non-profit organizations to improve care options; how to help employees find back-up childcare in an emergency; and how to help employees reduce their out-of-pocket expenses for childcare.

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Unmet childcare needs can result in high absentee rates and employees moving to jobs offering such benefits as daycare centers or flexible work schedules. High employee turnover often cuts productivity of an employer's workforce and requires investment of even more corporate resources to find and train new workers. Research has shown that the loss of an employee can cost an employer an average of one and two times the person's annual salary and benefits.

"Many employers in our six-county region have recognized competing demands of family life and work life," said Adele Simmons, Vice Chair and Senior Executive of Chicago Metropolis 2020. "They have stepped forward to help their employees with options ranging from flexible working hours and parenting seminars to providing childcare in the same building where the parent works.

"This is not a 'one size fits all' issue, and any employer, large or small, can reap the benefits of family-friendly programs," Simmons said.

"As our economy grows, so will the demand for childcare solutions," said Simmons. "Because the children of today's employees are our future workforce, it also is important to recognize that investment in improving the lives of those children now can bring benefits later."

Created by The Commercial Club of Chicago in 1999, Chicago Metropolis 2020 is a non-profit with a strong base in the business community and includes representatives of labor, government, faith-based groups and other civic leaders. Working in collaboration with other public and private groups, Chicago Metropolis 2020 takes a regional approach to try to improve the six-county region.

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The handbook is being mailed to employers throughout the region. Additional copies can be obtained, free of charge, by contacting Chicago Metropolis 2020 at 312-332-2020, and the handbook also can be accessed on-line at www.chicagometropolis2020.org.

Publication of the handbook was funded in part by the New Prospect Foundation.

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CHICAGO METROPOLIS 2020

MEDIA CONTACTS

PRIMARY CONTACTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT MATERIAL CONTAINED IN THE HANDBOOK, CHILDCARE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES.

ADELE SIMMONS (312-332-8160)

Vice Chair and Senior Executive, Chicago Metropolis 2020

Ms. Simmons leads the Chicago Metropolis 2020 efforts to improve access to quality early education.

SARA SLAUGHTER (312-332-8162)

Program Director, Chicago Metropolis 2020

BARBARA T. BOWMAN (312-755-2250, extension 2275)

President, Erikson Institute

An authority on early education, Ms. Bowman is a past president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Erikson Institute, affiliated with Loyola University in Chicago, prepares child development professionals.

THE FOLLOWING CAN ASSIST WITH EXAMPLES OF CHILDCARE SOLUTIONS IN PLACE AT AREA COMPANIES.

BOB SOBIECH (312-946-3629)

Director of Human Relations, Midwest Cluster, Deloitte & Touche LLP

Deloitte & Touche provides emergency and backup childcare to its employees when their children's usual care is not available or when their children are sick.

CHERYL BUEHNER-CROLL (773-989-2417)

Vice President and Dir. of Human Resources, Uptown National Bank of Chicago
Uptown, a community bank serving the north side of the city of Chicago, helps employees find out about local childcare options and learn about the different types of care available.

ANN FAHEY WIDMAN (847-938-6388)

Media Relations Manager, Abbott Laboratories

On-site day care, programs to help employees when children are out of school during the summer months and school holidays, and a collaborative initiative to improve the supply and quality of childcare in local communities are a few examples of ways that Abbott Laboratories has gone the extra mile to assist its employees' families. Abbott recently opened a new 46,000-square-foot, on-site childcare center at the company's global headquarters in Lake County. The center will accommodate more than 400 Abbott children, making it the largest childcare center in Illinois and one of the five largest in the country.

JEANNE ULATOWSKI (312-444-3614)

Vice President, Director of WorkLife, Northern Trust

Northern Trust offers accredited on-site childcare to its employees.