

Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of Covid-19:

7 key steps employers can take to support working parents



The consequences of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) outbreak are unprecedented and felt around the world. The pandemic is heavily affecting labour markets and economies, including global supply chains. Leading to widespread business disruptions, many businesses are struggling to survive. For many working parents and their children, the fast-evolving situation means disrupted education and childcare, family illness and potential loss of household income. By giving working parents the time, information, services and resources they need to cope with the crisis, companies can make a critical difference.

Employees in Switzerland are protected by national social security. Company-specific measures to ensure family-friendly policies and working conditions make an important contribution to wider social protection. For Swiss employers with employees working in countries with limited social security, company efforts to protect and support workers become even more critical. Employers should monitor advice provided by national and local authorities (e.g. on public health measures and work arrangements) and communicate critical information to the workforce in a timely manner. [UNICEF](#), [ILO](#) and [UN Women](#) have together developed preliminary recommendations for employers to protect workers and families and mitigate negative consequences stemming from Covid-19. The main points are summarized below. A link to the full report can be found at the end of this document.

1 Implement flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements give employees greater freedom of where and when they fulfil their job responsibilities. They support workers to meet personal and family needs during challenging circumstances

Support working parents with safe and appropriate childcare options

In the context of widespread school and childcare closures, employers can provide critical support to parents who are faced with limited or no childcare options. Childcare support can take multiple forms based on feasibility and workers' needs.

3 Strengthen occupational safety and health measures

Protecting the health of workers, customers, users and other affected third parties should be the foremost priority of employers. Measures should be in line with WHO recommendations and guidelines.

Provide guidance on occupational safety and health measures and hygiene practices

Physical distancing, hand washing and hygiene education are critical ways to avoid spreading of Covid-19. Messaging at the workplace should follow [WHO's advice for the public](#) and working parents should follow [UNICEF's guidance](#) to inform and protect their children.

“The burden on working parents has increased significantly due to the crisis. They have to live up to their responsibility at home - towards family and children - and at work. With family-friendly policies and working conditions, employers can provide them with critical and valuable support.»

Bettina Junker, Executive Director
UNICEF Schweiz und Liechtenstein

«Children are the hidden victims of the Covid-19 pandemic»

Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director

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Encourage workers to seek appropriate medical care in case of symptoms

Provide workers with guidance on where they can be referred if they present symptoms consistent with Covid-19, such as address and phone number of local hospitals, health authorities, emergency hotlines. Assist in safe transport for referral wherever possible and needed.

Support workers coping with stress and personal safety

Potential risk of unemployment and workplace inflexibility can increase parenting stress, which has an impact on parenting practices and parent-child relationships. Gather and share reliable information that will help workers under stress to accurately understand and cope with risks.

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Support government social protection measures

Social protection plays a central role in addressing vulnerabilities of workers and their families to poverty, inequality and deprivation, particularly in the context of Covid-19. While social protection is a government responsibility, family-friendly policies in the workplace can support these efforts.

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UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein...

... is committed to ensuring that children's rights are protected in the best possible way, even in exceptional times such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. The recommendations above, as well as the documents and further information below are intended to support companies and employers during this time. UNICEF is committed to the integrity of children and adolescents with numerous programs worldwide.

Further links and information

1. [Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19: Key steps employers can take](#)
(UNICEF, ILO, UN Women)
2. [Redesigning the workplace to be family-friendly: What governments and businesses can do](#)
(UNICEF)
3. [How to talk to your child about coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
(UNICEF)
4. [COVID-19 Parenting Tips](#)
(WHO, UNICEF, others)

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