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Dementia Toolkit Helps Caregivers

Posted on 06/1/2016 by [TheAARPBulletin](http://states.aarp.org/author/theaarpbulletin/) | [AARP Wisconsin](http://states.aarp.org/wi-dementia-toolkit-helps-caregivers//#discussion)

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Sonja Akright, left, and Mary Eslick, have their employer's support in caring for relatives with dementia. Photo by Ackerman + Gruber

By Joanne Cleaver

Every morning, when Mary Eslick arrives at her job as a payroll manager for Primex Inc., in Lake Geneva

The call will come from her mother. It will involve a crisis with her father, 85, whose Alzheimer's disease beloved garage machine shop. He sometimes forgets to eat or address his personal care and doesn't w

At some point, Eslick, 54, of Delavan, knows that a dementia-driven emergency will erupt. When it does departure. Her coworkers are poised to cover her work.

The Primex Family of Companies is one of the first employers in the state to get on board with the Wisc. Employers Toolkit (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia/communities.htm>).

Developed in collaboration with local health care providers, the Alzheimer's Association of Southeastern toolkit equips employers with ways to anticipate, manage and communicate about the collision of work for loved ones with dementia. The program stresses the need for employers to be flexible in providing le

The program was sparked by a recognition among state officials that dementia patients and their famili health care and social service programs, said Health Services Secretary Kitty Rhoades.

Rhoades formed the coalition to develop new ways to ensure quality of life for both patients and caregiv

The toolkit was introduced last fall, several months after a related state effort, the Building Dementia-Fr (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia/communities.htm>).

The toolkit "proved to be immensely popular from the moment it was unveiled," Rhoades recalled.

Simple strategies, such as providing a private room for caregivers to make and take calls with doctors a settings, including factories, stores and offices.

Rhoades' intent is to create a model that other states can adopt.

The need is widespread

Sam Wilson, AARP Wisconsin state director, said 10 percent of people in the state are caring for anothe

"Their needs are unique," Wilson said. "Most employer caregiving benefits and programs are designed fr dementia forces caregiving into a reactive mode that defies schedules."

Often, "Mom is fine in the morning, but she wanders off in the afternoon," he said of a typical situation.

The Society for Human Resource Management found in a 2015 survey (<http://www.shrm.org/Research/Benefits.pdf>) that only 13 percent of employers nationwide offer elder care leave programs that exceed t Medical Leave Act.

Employers are just beginning to realize that they must have accommodations uniquely designed for den National Alliance for Caregiving (<http://www.caregiving.org/>), based in Bethesda, Md.

"It's extremely expensive to replace these workers and their experience," Greene said, adding that this c which he called "innovative."

Implementing the recommendations offered in the toolkit can't come fast enough for workers facing es
Sonja Akright, 45, of Lake Geneva, senior customer service representative at the Primex Wireless divisi

Akright leads the company's annual community fundraiser for local Alzheimer's organizations and co-cl
her husband have both dealt with work conflicts in their families due to their grandparents' dementia.

"Employers need to know this is coming so they can take positive action," she said.

Joanne Cleaver is a freelance business writer and author living in Manistee, Mich.

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