



## **BALANCING FAMILY CAREGIVING AND WORK**

Approximately 70% of the one million family caregivers in BC are balancing the demands of caregiving and working full or part-time. This can result in caregivers quitting their jobs, retiring early, cutting back on hours, turning down promotions and loss of pension contributions. Employers experience higher absenteeism rates, more lateness and lower productivity.

If you are juggling the demands of work and caregiving, here are some ideas that might help:

- Talk to your employer, manager or human resource person about what is happening and your needs around caring for your family member.
- Flexibility is essential for a lot of caregivers to permit them to respond to emergencies or during periods of intense caregiving demands. Explore the options that are available in your workplace, such as flextime, a compressed work week, reduced hours of work, job sharing, leave of absence, gradual retirement or working from home. Even if these have not been used by anyone else before, your employer may still be open to considering them now.
- On the other hand, you may prefer to have a set work schedule so that you can plan for appointments and arrange for home support or respite.
- There are likely other family caregivers in your workplace who are also facing challenges. Consider developing your own support group at work. Meet during the lunch hour to share your challenges and successes. Or you might want to set-up something on-line where you can share resources, tips and questions with each other.
- Compassionate Care Benefits are available through Employment Insurance for employed family members caring for a gravely ill relative at risk of dying within 26 weeks. These benefits consist of six weeks total compensation per terminally ill family member plus two weeks of unpaid waiting period. For more information visit the Human Resources and Social Development Canada website at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca).
- Some employee benefits, such as extended health benefits and employee and family assistance programs, may extend to dependents and can help with family caregiving responsibilities. The workplace benefits available to you as a family caregiver may not be obvious or well-known even to your manager. You may need to do some research, along with your manager or human resource department about what benefits and options are available and how they apply to your situation.
- Make a list of what you need help with and when you need it. Decide what other family members can do and what outside services need to be brought in.
- Familiarize yourself with community resources that are available to help you. Contact the Family Caregivers' Network at 250-384-0408 or visit [www.familycaregiversnetwork.org](http://www.familycaregiversnetwork.org) for resources in your area.
- There is also a section on the FCNS website, under the Education tab, dedicated to "Supporting Family Caregivers in the Workplace". This section includes valuable information and resources for both employees and employers,

*By Barbara Small, Program Development Coordinator, Family Caregivers' Network Society, March 2011*