

# Action That Companies Be Required to Take to Ensure Employee Balance between Work and Eldercare (Proposals)<sup>1</sup>

Research Project toward the Realization of a Work-Life Balanced Society  
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We set out below our proposals concerning support for making it possible to balance work and eldercare. These proposals are made based on the analysis of data derived—by the University of Tokyo Institute of Social Science’s Research Project toward Realization of a Work-Life Balanced Society—from the study of individuals (effective sample size for analysis: 2,099 persons), mainly employees aged 40 or above of six of the companies participating in the project, and of individuals (effective sample size: 1,726 persons, 1,482 of whom were full-time employees) studied through workplaces in Hyogo Prefecture with the cooperation of Hyogo Work and Life Center. For the research outline and report, please refer to the Japanese versions.

## Proposals concerning support for balancing work and eldercare

The aim of this research is to examine the anxiety of employees mainly aged 40 or above relating to the balance between work and eldercare and the level of their awareness of support measures taken in the workplace and, anticipating the coming of a time when the number of employees achieving a work-eldercare balance will increase, to clarify what kind of information and support companies should provide. Based on the research results, below we set out the issues that companies should address in order to support a balance between employees’ work and eldercare.

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**Proposal 1** Supporting the creation of a balance between employees' work and eldercare is a particularly important task for corporate management

At present, only a small number of people take eldercare leave, but many employees aged 40 or above, particularly those in their fifties, are affected by eldercare issues. The issue of balancing work and eldercare is one that affects both males and females, and the aforesaid age group comprises core personnel responsible for corporate management. It is core personnel such as these who find it difficult and stressful to balance work and eldercare, and if difficulty of achieving work-eldercare balance leads them to leave their jobs, their companies lose out very heavily. In view of this, it is of great importance for corporate management to gain an accurate grasp of the state of employee caregiving and of employee needs with regard to achieving work-eldercare balance, and to provide support for the achievement of this balance.

**Proposal 2** To make active efforts to identify often-latent employee needs with regard to eldercare

It became clear from the research that many company employees think that issues associated with parental and other family eldercare should be resolved privately, and that they do not convey their eldercare needs to their companies. Therefore, employee issues relating to eldercare, which tend to lie dormant in this way, need to be identified accurately. To do so, it is essential to take active steps to identify the situation within companies with regard to the status of the employees' work-eldercare balance and all issues relating thereto, doing so by such means as questionnaire surveys of employees and, in companies in which labor unions are organized, liaison with those unions.

**Proposal 3** To make active efforts to eliminate employees' anxiety relating to eldercare, in order to give them the prospect of achieving work-eldercare balance

When facing eldercare issues in the future, many employees hope that, without quitting their jobs, they can continue to perform their normal duties while using a work-eldercare balance support system, but nevertheless harbor anxiety about balancing work and eldercare, and in many cases feel that they will be unable to continue working. A number of effective measures could be taken to eliminate employee anxiety relating to work-eldercare balance and give them the prospect of continuing to work. These include (i) enabling employees to seek advice regarding the balance of work and eldercare by speaking about eldercare issues with superiors and coworkers in

their workplaces, (ii) not only introducing a support system for work-eldercare balance but also making employees thoroughly conversant with the details of the system, also providing workplaces where the system can be used, and (iii) ensuring that work practices facilitate achievement of work-life balance.

**Proposal 4** To realize diverse work practices that permit a balance of caregiving and continued working, without total dependence on taking long-term leave

There are highly diverse needs for eldercare support, irrespective of the situation when caregiving is being conducted or of whether or not eldercare is currently taking place. In addition, if the necessity for eldercare persists for a long period, support for work-eldercare balance should not necessarily be premised on the taking of long-term leave, but rather on mechanisms that make it possible to give eldercare while still working, for example the reform of normal working practices to create workplaces that enable work-life balance to be achieved, and improvements such as permitting eldercare leave to be taken in half-day or one-day units, and short-time working.

**Proposal 5** To provide all employees aged 40 or above with information concerning work-eldercare balance, including about in-house systems or public nursing eldercare insurance schemes

Considerable numbers of company employees lack adequate knowledge of the mechanisms of public nursing eldercare insurance schemes and in-house systems to support work-eldercare balance, and management personnel whom people in workplaces wish to ask for advice do not themselves fully understand their own companies' in-house systems. In order to eliminate this state of affairs, companies are to be required to make managers and all employees aged 40 or more, i.e. those who are the more likely to encounter eldercare-related issues, thoroughly conversant with public nursing eldercare insurance schemes and in-house systems to support work-eldercare balance.

**Proposal 6** To provide all female employees with constant work-care balance support as a means of providing long-term career support

Compared with males, large numbers of female employees suffer anxiety about eldercare, particularly anxiety about continuing to work by means of work-eldercare balance. One reason why numerous women are worried about future eldercare in this way is that many middle-aged and older women working as full-time employees are single. Another reason is that whereas—when eldercare issues arise—many male employees assume that their spouses will perform the caregiving, married female employees believe that they themselves will carry out the caregiving, including for their spouses’ relatives. In consequence, to make it possible for female employees to develop long-term careers, it is essential to provide them with support that includes work-care balance support not only during the period when they are raising children, and to encourage males to engage in caregiving.