



## Tips for Leaders of Employees with School-Aged Children

Times are stressful, and many members of the UNM Health family are experiencing difficulties with the start of the school year. In order to help you to best support your team, here is a list of things you can do to alleviate some of that stress for them, for others on the team, and even for yourself!

### Flexibility

- Negotiation and flexibility are key! This will be hard, especially at first, while the dust is settling. Even when they think they have it down, more issues may come into the mix. Treat each situation as unique, and partner with your employee - ask what they think will work best. They likely have a plan in mind to get their work done, and still meet the needs of their families.
- Evaluate the work that must be done, including timelines and deadlines. Can it realistically be done at home? Is work from home even possible in your area? Ask yourself “why” or “why not” at least five times to make sure you’re not caught in the “we’ve always done it that way” mentality. Utilize work-from-home logs in the beginning, to get a feel for productivity.
- Consider flexible work hours, and if the employee is willing to try off-hours, try it, even if just as a test. You can re-evaluate after a short period of time, and make adjustments as necessary. Example: “it’s okay if you want to work 5am-8am, and take time to help your child from 8am – 11am.”
- Know that productivity may suffer a bit. Don’t assume the employee isn’t working, or “slacking off.” Instead, work with them to find out what is happening. Re-negotiate deadlines when possible, and extend grace when they are struggling. Ask what you can do to help.

### Communication

- Communicate the “why,” and do it often. If things are working out, tell them exactly what they need to know – they can’t change if they don’t know there is a problem, and they may just surprise you with an alternative solution.
- Strive for a healthy balance of fairness among the entire team, and ask others on the team how they might be willing to help, including trades for work assignments or days in and out of the office. Expect heavier days where employees may need flexible work hours – Mondays may be especially hard, as the week begins and new assignments begin for children. Plan ahead, so that you have ample coverage.



## Processes

- Set up processes, such as rotation schedules, or handoffs, and work with the team to ensure they are monitored and kept up to date. Post schedules so everyone knows where everyone is working each day. Share Outlook calendars if at all possible.
- Empower your employees to make trades with coworkers, without your interference, and encourage them to talk to you if they ever feel things are not fair amongst the team.

## Professionalism

- Expect human nature to take over – if employees are working from home, children (or pets!) may be seen or heard in the background of a virtual meeting, and that’s okay! Remember that school-aged children are accustomed to raising their hand in class, and getting their questions answered just when they need it. Extend grace to your employees if they must “step away” during the department staff meeting, or if they need an “emergency lunch hour” at 9am.
- You may occasionally see employees out of dress code when working from home. Remember that it may not always be possible to wear a suit or dress when working from home, but encourage them to use their best judgement regarding professionalism when they are participating in virtual meetings if possible.

## Wellness

- Conduct weekly wellness checks – what are they struggling with, and what resources might you be able to provide? Recognize burnout early on. For tips on recognizing burnout and other well-being resources, visit the **Employee Well-Being website**. Encourage employees to utilize resources when they are actually at the worksite, as they may be less likely to access from home.
- Remind your employees to take breaks and decompress a few times a day. If they want to function at their best, they need to re-charge periodically. Create wellness accountability among the team, or create wellness “challenges.”
- Encourage “no meeting zones.” For example, Friday afternoons from 4pm – 5pm should be reserved for wrapping up the week. Respect the employee’s time; early on Friday, ask what you can do to help them finish up the week’s work. The same may apply for Monday mornings at 8am, which could be better utilized for planning, checking email, etc.
- Call Outcomes, Organizational and Professional Development or Employee Well-Being to talk about your situation – it may just be about hearing what others are doing, that you just hadn’t considered, or brainstorming options.