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for women and business**

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***“After-School Worries: Tough on Parents, Bad for Business”***

**Catalyst and Brandeis Women’s Studies Research Center release study  
revealing impact on business and employees**

- ❖ Two-thirds of working parents are employed full-time.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Workplace stress costs companies an estimated \$50-\$300 billion in lost job productivity each year.<sup>2</sup>

**Study Summary:**

- ❖ Parental concern over what their kids are doing after school (PCAST – Parental Concern over After School Time) potentially affects, based on census data, one-third of the labor force and is a key employee stressor.
- ❖ Although most employed parents contribute productively and effectively to the organizations in which they work, of the working parents studied in three *Fortune* 100 organizations, 1 in 20, fathers *and* mothers, experience high PCAST.
- ❖ PCAST affects working parents regardless of rank, race, or gender.
- ❖ PCAST gives rise to job disruptions, distractions, and errors, negative attitudes about promotion opportunities, and lower job satisfaction—all of which cost companies.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Organizational supports and workplace flexibility are rated by working parents across the board as most effective in reducing PCAST stress.
- ❖ Companies can lessen the negative consequences caused by PCAST by developing an Agile Workplace\* and actively communicating the availability of key supports to working parent employees.

\*The Agile Workplace is flexibility redefined, implying effectiveness and mastery. By definition it also implies a lack of rigidity that enables workers to “work smart” and perform better, focusing on goals and results.

<sup>1</sup> As of 2005, among parents of minor children, 66.5 percent were employed full-time (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment Characteristics of Families in 2005*, News Release, April 27, 2006, Washington, DC, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/famee.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> Steven L. Sauter, Lawrence R. Murphy, and Joseph J. Hurrell, Jr., “Prevention of Work-related Psychological Disorders,” *American Psychologist*, 45(1990): 1146-1158; Paul J. Rosch, M.D., F.A.C.P., Editor, “The Quandary of Job Stress Compensation,” *Health and Stress*, the American Institute of Stress (March 2001) p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Rosalind Barnett and Karen Gareis, “Parental After-School Stress and Psychological Well-Being,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68 (2006): 101-108; Rosalind Barnett and Karen Gareis, “Antecedents and Correlates of Parental After-School Concerns: Exploring A Newly Identified Work-Family Stressor,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49 (2006): 1382-1399.

## Key Findings:

- ❖ PCAST is an equal-opportunity concern, cutting across the organization from factory floor to the executive suite, with the same negative effects.
- ❖ Working parents are at higher PCAST risk when their children spend more time unsupervised, when they have more responsibility for childcare in their households, and when they work longer hours.
- ❖ Parents' PCAST level is higher when children are older (grades 6-12) because this age group is more likely to be unsupervised.
- ❖ Contrary to popular stereotype, working mothers do *not* worry more "just because they are mothers" but because they more often have responsibility for childcare. A hefty majority—79.9 percent—of women report having the main or total responsibility for childcare in their households.
- ❖ A significant number of working fathers experience high levels of PCAST.
- ❖ Men with high PCAST are less satisfied with their advancement opportunities.
- ❖ Non-white parents may be at greater risk of PCAST because they tend to use after-school arrangements that have high PCAST risk factors.
- ❖ Supportive supervisors/managers can greatly reduce parents' general caregiving stress.
- ❖ A greater degree of control over work scheduling, including the ability to leave work at a regular time each day and/or the use of flex-time, telecommuting, and bankable hours, protects against PCAST.
- ❖ Some of the very supports that high-PCAST parents identify as most effective are those that many employees are not sure are available. Some of the most highly desired supports—like bankable hours—are often unavailable (or perceived to be unavailable).
- ❖ Other research shows that companies offering flexible scheduling options enjoy bottom-line benefits, including enhanced recruitment and retention, lower health-care costs, productivity gains, and increased shareholder returns.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ High-PCAST parents report lower access to effective policies, but those who are most in need *will* use certain workplace supports *if* they are offered and *if* they know they exist.
- ❖ Some working parents don't take advantage of available supports, even when they are available and needed, because they fear that it might hurt their careers.

## What companies can do:

- ❖ Develop "The Agile Workplace" – placing emphasis on more job control enabling workers to "work smart" and perform better; focusing on goals and results; and granting all employees access to flexible work programs, such as flex-time, telecommuting and flex-space.
- ❖ Foster a culture of understanding among managers and supervisors by better educating supervisors and managers about the benefits of an agile workplace.
- ❖ Actively communicate the availability of supports.
- ❖ Adjust employees' misperceptions about consequences associated with use of supports.
- ❖ Expand supports related to after-school care and invest in community services that do.

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<sup>4</sup> Corporate Voices for Working Families, *Business Impacts of Flexibility: An Imperative for Expansion*, 2005, [http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org/flex\\_report/flex\\_report.shtml](http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org/flex_report/flex_report.shtml).

**The PCAST TEN:** The top 10 questions **working parents** should ask their employers:

- ❖ Do I have the ability to telecommute on a regularly scheduled basis?
- ❖ Do I have a subsidy for after-school care?
- ❖ Do I have volunteer leave (time off work to be involved in children's school on a regular basis)?
- ❖ Do I have backup after-school care?
- ❖ Do I have reimbursement for backup care?
- ❖ Do I have the ability to bring my child to work if necessary?
- ❖ Is there on-site after-school care?
- ❖ Do I have bankable hours?
- ❖ Are there resources/referrals for after-school care?
- ❖ Are parent networking/support groups or family-related education and support programs available?

**This study is sponsored by Citigroup, Fannie Mae and Pfizer**

**METHODOLOGY:** The report highlights findings from a survey of 1,755 employed parents (44.7 percent fathers, 55.3 percent mothers) who work at one of three *Fortune* 100 companies across the United States, and who have school-aged children. We asked these working parents to rate and describe their concerns about their children, and the arrangements they've made for their children during the after-school hours, and to identify the workplace supports and job characteristics that either contribute to or help ease those concerns.

**Catalyst** is the leading research and advisory organization working with businesses and the professions to build inclusive environments and expand opportunities for women at work. As an independent, nonprofit membership organization, Catalyst conducts research on all aspects of women's career advancement and provides strategic and web-based consulting services globally. With the support and confidence of member corporations and firms, Catalyst remains connected to business and its changing needs. In addition, Catalyst honors exemplary business initiatives that promote women's leadership with the annual Catalyst Award. With offices in New York, San Jose, Toronto and Zug, Catalyst is consistently ranked No. 1 among U.S. nonprofits focused on women's issues by The American Institute of Philanthropy. This study was conducted in cooperation with the **Community, Families & Work Program, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University**.

**The Community, Families & Work Program (CFWP) at Brandeis University** conducts cutting edge, methodically innovative, and policy-oriented research to enhance family well-being. Our major funding has come from the State Street Bank Foundation, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. Our recently completed and ongoing research projects include: (1) understanding how parents of school-aged children coordinate their work schedules with their children's school, after-school, and transportation schedules; (2) identifying the characteristics of employee-friendly after-school programs to create a "best practices" after-school program profile for use by programs and parents; and (3) assessing the effects of employed caregivers' concerns about their adult/elderly dependents on employee and organizational outcomes as well as which workplace policies and practices are most helpful to caregivers.

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