

Trends in Bereavement Support

As 18% of companies consider expanding their bereavement leave and support policies over the next two years (and many others already have), consider which of these enhancements might be a good fit for your organization.

- ❑ Defining family members more broadly. Instead of limiting family members to a spouse, parent, child or sibling, companies increasingly recognize domestic partners, grandparents, close relationships and even employees' own definitions of chosen family.
- ❑ Pregnancy and reproductive loss. One of the biggest changes we're seeing is support after a miscarriage, stillbirth, unsuccessful IVF, failed adoption or failed surrogacy. As of 2024, SHRM found that 39% of employers offering bereavement leave included pregnancy loss, failed surrogacy or failed adoption, and some states (with Illinois leading the change) have specific leave for pregnancy and related loss.
- ❑ Nonconsecutive leave. Companies are allowing available days to be used over several weeks or months—for the funeral, estate matters, anniversaries, religious observances, and so on. SHRM champions staggered leave because grief isn't linear, and estate matters can be stressful and time-consuming.
- ❑ Flexible return to work. Temporary remote work, reduced schedules, lighter workloads or additional breaks can help ease the transition back to work, and are generally handled on a case-by-case basis. Organizations often start with a framework that allows managers to make decisions within guardrails.
- ❑ Grief support. Employee assistance programs, grief counseling, funeral or memorial assistance, meal delivery and similar services are all options that can be included in a bereavement support program that goes beyond paid time off.
- ❑ More paid time off. Some companies are moving to a tiered approach, depending on the loss. For example:
 - Core leave: 3 or 5 paid days for the loss of someone close
 - Extended circumstances: Up to 10 or 15 days for particularly significant losses, such as a spouse, partner or child
 - Flexibility: Allow managers some autonomy for relationships that don't fit neatly into policy definitions

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