

- Employee assistance programs help employees deal with a variety of personal problems, such as substance abuse, marital difficulties, and mental health. EAPs often deal directly with work-lifestyle issues by including the resource and referral services listed above, or by aiding employees in dealing with the stress resulting from conflicting work and homelife demands.
- “Cafeteria” benefits plans are designed to let employees pick and choose among a variety of health and insurance benefits according to their needs. These plans provide an alternative to traditional health benefits programs which have tended to offer a uniform benefit selection, often leading to duplication and additional expense. “Cafeteria” or flexible benefit plans offer standard choices of medical, dental and disability coverage, but may also include vacation, sick and personal leave options, wellness and recreation options, parental care, retirement programs, financial planning, and legal assistance. The rationale behind the provision of flexible benefits is that employee needs change over the lifecycle and that allowing employees to customize their plans can contain benefits costs for everyone.

Leave benefits

In their broadest sense, leave policies provide employees with time off from work to attend to personal or family matters. Generally, this time off is triggered by a birth, adoption, or serious illness of a family member, but can also include time for study, or for personal/professional pursuits. Options range from a few hours or days off to attend a funeral to extended child “nurturing” leaves of several years’ duration granted to parents who would like some time out of the workforce in order to raise their children. For the purposes of this discussion, the term “leave” will be used to refer to both short- and long-term leaves which are paid or unpaid and which allow employees time off beyond their statutory (parental, vacation, and sick leave) entitlements.

Personal days is a policy permitting paid time off for short periods of time (days, hours) to deal with personal matters. These options allow employees to take time off for matters other than their own illness and preserve their sick days for their own use.

Parental/family leave is an extended period of several months or years, beyond the employee’s legislated entitlement, to allow time for parenting or the care of adult dependents. These leaves may be paid or unpaid, and normally guarantee either the same job or a comparable job upon return. Seniority may or may not be accrued.

Alternative work arrangements

Organizations who are interested in reducing work-life conflict should also consider the provision of flexible work arrangements for employees. Alternative work arrangements provide employees some measure of flexibility in either work time or work place to help them accommodate their personal needs. Schedule modifications range from schedules that can be varied on a day-to-day basis, to those which require employees to choose a schedule well in advance and adhere to the hours selected. Work place modifications include such options as work at home arrangements and satellite offices established at sites remote from the primary workplace aimed at reducing employee commute times. Following is a list of the most popular flexible work arrangements.

- Flextime arrangements permit flexible start and stop times so long as a standard number of hours is worked. Flextime schedules usually center around “core hours” of