



# SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS

## Information for Managers & Supervisors during COVID-19

Western acknowledges that staff caring for or home-schooling young children and/or supporting family members who are elderly, have a disability or a medical condition are often finding it very difficult to balance work and family commitments during COVID-19. The University understands parents and carers are performing a very important role in our community and need support to keep doing so through COVID-19. To support parents and carers, Western is committed to being innovative, and highly flexible in our study and work arrangements. This will help ensure parents and carers have the opportunity to successfully participate and progress when studying and/or working with us. As a manager or supervisor you can make a difference in this situation.

### MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS ROLE IN SUPPORTING STAFF

Managers and Supervisors have an important role to play in supporting staff who are parents and carers, especially in the context of the rapid change to our living and working environments caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Working remotely has now become essential, and there are less care and support options available. There is a need for managers and supervisors to embrace greater flexibility to ensure staff can navigate these new environments in the most effective and productive ways possible.

If a staff member is experiencing increased parent or carer responsibilities as a result of COVID-19, a manager or supervisor should:

- approach any conversations about flexible work from a “why not” perspective. Be open to accommodating adjustments to the pattern or hours of work, where possible. Flexibility in when work hours are undertaken is likely to be a critical factor in ensuring a staff member can maintain their work productivity in the current circumstances. Refer to the [Workplace Flexibility Policy](#) for further information and consult with your [Senior HR Partner](#) or [HR Advisor](#) prior to finalising arrangements.
- ensure staff are aware of the University’s COVID-19 communications strategies, including the [Information On Coronavirus](#) webpage, and encourage any affected staff member/s to access the parent and carer support information and networks outlined in the [Information for Students and Staff During COVID-19](#) resource.
- Advise the staff member of available leave options where relevant, including those under the [COVID-19 Special leave scheme](#).
- refer the staff member to the appropriate [Senior HR Partner](#) or [HR Advisor](#), or [OED](#) for further advice if needed.
- seek advice from their [Senior HR Partner](#) if assistance is needed.
- encourage the staff member to seek counselling support via [AccessEAP](#) where the staff member is distressed or overwhelmed by their current circumstances, and
- remember to look after your own wellbeing. If you are feeling overwhelmed speak to your colleagues, talk to your manager, or contact [AccessEAP](#) for support and advice.

### UNIVERSITY SUPPORTS

#### Counselling and Wellbeing Support and Information

- The [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) offers a confidential counselling and support service for personal or work related issues. Six sessions are available annually to all staff, including related family members at no cost and can be accessed via [AccessEAP](#) or by phoning **1800 818 728**. Access EAP is available as a phone counselling service. The EAP also offers a [Manager Support Hotline](#) which is available to all managers and supervisors in need of advice or support.



- The **Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing team** have a range of resources available for staff on their webpages which support **physical and mental wellbeing**. Supervisors and managers can also contact **WHS&W** for further advice and support.
- The **Engaged Parents Network (EPN)** is a network for university staff and students with a focus on supporting a positive, inclusive and family friendly culture at Western. The EPN also has an active Yammer group for parents to share information and seek advice. To join the EPN email [b.laws@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:b.laws@westernsydney.edu.au).
- The **Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)** provides a range of resources for parents and carers. Parenting support fact sheets and information for staff can be found on the **Parenting Support webpage**. There is also information for carers on the **Disabilities webpage**. Staff can also contact **OED** for further information or advice.

## Adjustments to Working Arrangements

### Leave Provisions

During COVID-19 additional leave entitlements have been introduced which may be available for staff with increased parental or carer responsibilities. Special leave of up to **10 days** may be available for staff with increased child minding or caring responsibilities as a direct result of COVID-19, once they have exhausted their existing personal leave entitlements. More information is available at **COVID –19 special leave**. Further information about this and other leave options outlined in the relevant **Staff Agreement**, can be provided by your relevant Senior **HR Partner** or **HR Advisor**.

### Flexible work options

As a large number of staff are now working remotely, and navigating increased caring responsibilities due to the current COVID-19 health crisis, the University needs to be highly flexible in its approach to managing work practices where possible. Flexibility will be a critical tool for many managers and supervisors over the coming period to ensure our staff are able to maintain their productivity and achieve results in the most efficient way possible.

A staff member with parental or caring responsibilities has the right to request a change in their working arrangements under the **Fair Work Act**. Some examples of flexible work options that may be requested include:

- Adjusting start and finish times to accommodate caring responsibilities
- Working standard hours flexibly over an extended period of time i.e. a part-time staff member working 21 hours over three days, may request flexibility to spread their hours over five days to allow shorter days and accommodate their increased caring responsibilities.
- Requesting a flexible working arrangement in accordance with the applicable Enterprise Agreement.

Managers and supervisors should ensure they are familiar with the **Workplace Flexibility Policy**, which provides further details on requesting flexible work options, and related responsibilities for managers/supervisors, and consult with their **Senior HR Partner** before finalising arrangements.

For more information on flexible work at Western visit the **Flexible Work Options** or **Flexible Work Arrangements** webpages. A short online training module is also available to all staff, with tailored content for managers and supervisor via MyCareer online – search *Flexible Work at Western Sydney University*.

## RESOURCES & TIPS FOR MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS

- **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resource: Ten tips to successfully lead a remote team** is a resource developed by the **Australian Industry Group** and looks at some of the business imperatives of working with and supporting remote teams.
- **8 Ways to Manage Your Team While Social Distancing** is developed by **The Harvard Business Review** and highlights the need to stay connected and look after the wellbeing of your team.
- **15 Pretty Good Virtual Team Building Ideas** is a resource developed by **RapidStart Leadership** and includes a range of quick and easy team building exercises to help staff feel engaged and part of the team.



## OTHER RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

### General

**Carer Gateway** (1800422 737) is coordinated by the Department of Social Services and provides a range of information that can help carers in their role, from practical advice and resources, to help finding support services.

**Carers NSW** (1800 242 636) works with all carers regardless of their age, location, life-stage or circumstances. This includes those caring for individuals with support needs relating to ageing, disability, health and mental illness. Carers NSW can be contacted on

**Young Carers Australia** (1800 242 636) assists children and young people, 25 years or under who help to support a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.

### Online Resources

Westerns Information on Coronavirus website:

<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/coronavirus-information.html>

Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing webpage:

[westernsydney.edu.au/equity\\_diversity/equity\\_and\\_diversity/gender\\_equality/family\\_and\\_domestic\\_violence](https://westernsydney.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/gender_equality/family_and_domestic_violence)

Office of Equity and Diversity – Parenting Support

[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/equity\\_diversity/equity\\_and\\_diversity/gender\\_equality/parenting\\_support](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/gender_equality/parenting_support)

Office of Equity and Diversity – Disabilities

[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/equity\\_diversity/equity\\_and\\_diversity/disabilities](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/disabilities)

Flexible Work Options:

[westernsydney.edu.au/people\\_and\\_culture/opc/your\\_employment/flexible\\_work\\_options](https://westernsydney.edu.au/people_and_culture/opc/your_employment/flexible_work_options)

[westernsydney.edu.au/equity\\_diversity/equity\\_and\\_diversity/gender\\_equality/flexible\\_working\\_arrangements](https://westernsydney.edu.au/equity_diversity/equity_and_diversity/gender_equality/flexible_working_arrangements)

### Relevant Policies and Guidelines

Disability Policy

<https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=94>

Workplace Flexibility Policy:

<https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=137>

Enterprise Agreements:

[westernsydney.edu.au/human\\_resources/ohr/uws\\_enterprise\\_agreements](https://westernsydney.edu.au/human_resources/ohr/uws_enterprise_agreements)