National Work + Family Standards

updated May 2023

The future of work is family friendly.

Contents

Employers are not required to fulfil all of the criteria under each standard. However, they must meet the minimum required benchmark to qualify for certification.

To check if your workplace is eligible to certify complete the benchmarking self assessment on the Family Friendly Workplaces website.

Development of the Standards

In 2021, Parents At Work and UNICEF Australia have united with industry and community leaders to develop National Work + Family Standards in response to the results of the National Working Families Report 2019 and the impact of COVID-19 on families and workplaces.

The standards have been developed in line with our Social Impact Framework, from our research partner the Impact Institute, and input from strategic partners, diversity and inclusion, family wellbeing and other policy experts with the aim to:

- **Educate employers** – on the importance of embracing family-friendly policies and practices as an enabler of workplace diversity and inclusion, health and wellbeing
- **Certify employers** – that meet minimum standards and recognise those that go above and beyond
- **Provide a framework and guidelines** – to employers to foster a family-friendly workplace culture
- **Develop** – a sustainable way of providing employers with ongoing best practice work + family research, policies and guidance

The National Work + Family Standards are represented across Flexible Work, Parental Leave, Leadership Culture, Family Care, Family Wellbeing and Measurement.

Employers are encouraged to review the standards and determine how they can adopt and enhance their policies and practices to effectively embed support for their employees and leaders, using the framework of Family Friendly Workplaces as a guide.

For employers interested in being certified as a Family Inclusive Workplace, criteria has been developed under each standard which enables employers to benchmark their progress, areas of strength, and areas for improvement.

Continuous Improvement of the Standards

In May 2023, Family Friendly Workplaces in partnership with Western Sydney University have reviewed the National Work & Family Standards. The Standards have been amended to promote inclusivity, to increase specificity to guide employers towards their goal of building a family-friendly workplace, and to enhance alignment with the Social Impact Framework.

We extend our special thanks to the Western Sydney University project team including Associate Professor Emilee Gilbert, Doctor Sarah Duffy, Doctor Michelle O'Shea, and Doctor Alina Ewald.

**For more information, please contact
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or visit www.familyfriendlyworkplaces.com**
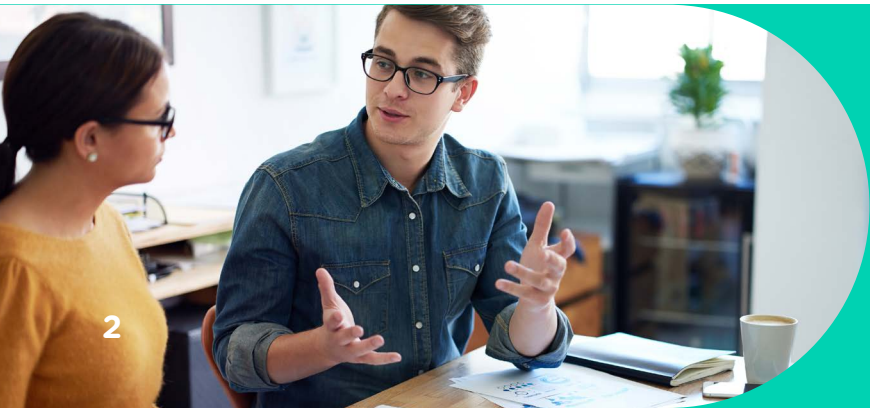
Flexible Work Standards

Embedded support for flexible work practices to enable employees to combine work with caring responsibilities.

Standards	Criteria Summary for Assessment
1. A Flexible Work Policy/ Strategy/Framework is available in the organisation.	• A formalised flexible work policy, strategy or framework exists and is inclusive of all employees. • The policy encompasses provisions for flexibility of how, when and where in which work is performed. • There is flexibility in job structure (i.e., job sharing). • There is a range of flexible work arrangements offered allowing employees to facilitate, combine, and achieve work and family life commitments. • Policy is reviewed at a minimum every 2 years.
2. Flexible Work is promoted and practiced, and there are examples of diverse flexible work types at every level in the organisation.	• The organisation uses varied communication methods to actively promote the uptake of flexible working practices within the organisation. • There are diverse examples of flexible work arrangements showcased via employee stories at every level of the organisation.
3. Technology and tools are provided to enable different types of flexible work.	• Flexible work is enabled by providing employees the relevant technology and or tools necessary to perform their work flexibly. • Employees have access to work tools, resources and training to facilitate flexible work.
4. Leaders are provided with the educational resources to support a flexible workplace and workforce.	• The organisation provides leaders with a framework, training and guidelines on how to effectively facilitate flexible work considering individuals, teams and other stakeholders. • Leaders are encouraged to facilitate flexibility and hybrid ways of working consistent with the organisation's policy, strategy or framework. • Leaders understand where they can seek support in structuring jobs to enable flexible work approaches. • Leaders promote and normalise flexible work as "business as usual".
5. Leaders role model flexible work.	• Leaders promote and practice a range of flexible work types. • Leaders normalise flexible working practices, contributing to a culture of belonging across every level of the organisation.

Parental Leave Standards

Embedded support for parental leave transition that is gender and family inclusive.

Standards	Criteria Summary
1. A paid Parental Leave Policy/Strategy/ Framework is available in the organisation.	• A formalised paid parental leave policy, strategy or framework exists and is accessible to all employees, regardless of gender, and is inclusive of all ways a child may join a family including same sex families and single parent families. • Policy may include provisions for paid superannuation on unpaid parental leave and may be accessed flexibly. • Policy is reviewed at a minimum every 2 years.
2. Parental leave and support are communicated and promoted at every level of the organisation.	• The organisation uses varied communication methods to create awareness of and access to parental leave for all employees. • Diverse genders and families are showcased via employee stories to promote inclusion. • Flexible and varied ways of taking leave are showcased that accommodate different needs and circumstances.
3. Parental leave provisions are in place for pregnancy loss, perinatal and post-natal anxiety, and depression.	• The organisation has provisions in place for instances of pregnancy loss including stillbirth, miscarriage and early pregnancy loss, perinatal and post-natal anxiety and depression for all employees. • Employees are provided with information on how to access support-based referral services.
4. Processes exist to support employees prior to, during and returning from parental leave.	• A documented organisational process (including educational resources) exists to support parental leave transition, including prior to, during and on return from parental leave. • Process includes preferred communication and engagement whilst on leave including paid 'keeping in touch' days. • Return to work transition process and support is actively promoted and provided to enable combining of work and family commitments. • The organisational culture values the unique knowledge and skills employees develop during a period of parental leave.
5. Leaders are enabled to support parental leave requests and facilitate the return to work.	• The organisation provides leaders with a parental leave policy and clear written guidelines on how to effectively support parental leave transition in their team. • Leaders are required to facilitate parental leave return to work transition, consistent with the organisation's policy or framework. • Leaders are provided with tools and/or training to reduce the likelihood of pregnancy, parenting, and gendered discrimination. • Leaders understand where they can seek support to assist employees with parental leave and return to work provisions.
5. Policy supports are in place for fertility and pre-natal care.	• The organisation has supports in place to recognise and accommodate fertility and pre-natal care. • Policy may include leave provisions and workplace accommodations for assisted reproductive technologies and treatments.

Leadership Culture

Leaders of the organisation are enabled to embed a family friendly workplace culture.

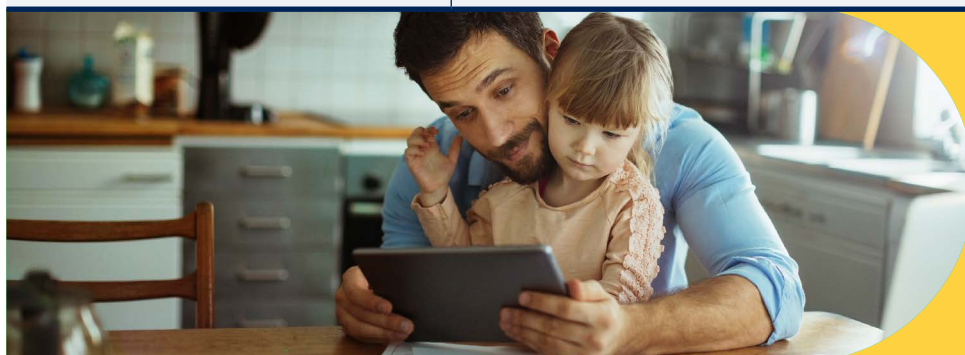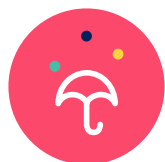| Standards	Criteria Summary
1. Leaders are enabled to implement Family Friendly Workplace policies and practices.	• Leaders have access to toolkits, development, or resources to enable them to make decisions which reflect the organisation's Family Friendly Workplace policies and practices. • Leaders are made aware of the strategic importance of administering the organisation's policies and practices consistently and equitably across family structures and caring arrangements. • Through ongoing workplace training and education, leaders are empowered to identity risk factors for discrimination and/or harassment related to pregnancy, parenting, gender, and caring.
2. Leaders proactively foster a Family Friendly Workplace culture.	• Leaders are expected to support and implement the organisation's Family Friendly Workplace policies and practices consistently. • Leaders build an organisational culture of inclusion across a diverse range of work structures and family arrangements and as part of an ongoing program seek feedback on employee's experience of a Family Friendly Workplace culture. • Leaders understand where they can seek support in managing Family Friendly Workplaces outcomes.
3. Leaders enact practices that role model a Family Friendly Workplace culture.	• Leaders are expected to role model family-inclusive values and behaviours that promote a workplace that values employee work life wellbeing across all levels of the organisation. • Leaders empower and enable all employees to engage in family friendly practices.

Family Care Standards

Embedded support for employees when caring for their family.

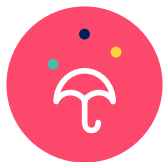| Standards	Criteria Summary
1. A Carers Policy/Strategy/Framework is available in the organisation	• A formalised carers policy, strategy or framework is accessible to all employees. • Policy supports employees' caring for children, dependants, a family member or a kinship relationship with a disability, a mental or chronic illness, or who are aged/elderly. • The policy features paid and unpaid provisions. • Policy is reviewed at a minimum every 2 years.
2. Caring provisions are promoted and supported, there are examples of caring support at every level of the organisation.	• The organisation utilises varied communication methods to promote support for carers within the organisation. • Diverse gender and family caring situations are showcased via employee stories to destigmatise and normalise caring responsibilities and promote inclusion.
3. Employees are supported in caring situations (inc. foreseen/unforeseen).	• The organisation supports employees when caring situations arise including provision of support that may include access to short notice leave, increased flexibility, or referral to back up care.
4. Provisions for child feeding are in place and broadly communicated and promoted.	• Parents are provided paid breaks with access to an appropriate, comfortable, private space for breastfeeding and expressing of breast milk and storage, and diverse ways of child feeding that promote inclusivity across genders. • The organisation creates a supportive environment that enables families to meet their child's/children's feeding needs.
5. Leaders are enabled to support employees with caring responsibilities.	• The organisation provides leaders with a carers framework and guidelines outlining how they are expected to support employees with caring commitments in their team. • Leaders are required to facilitate carers leave within the organisation's policy or framework. • Leaders are provided with tools and/or training to reduce the likelihood of caring discrimination. • Leaders understand where they can seek support in managing carer needs.

Family Wellbeing Standards (1/2)

Embedded support to promote wellbeing of employees and their families.

Standards	Criteria Summary
1. A Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy/ Framework exists in the organisation	• The organisation formally recognises the importance of mental health, physical, psychosocial and financial wellbeing in the workplace as part of their diversity, inclusion, health and safety policy or framework, and is accessible to all employees. • The policy features paid and/or unpaid leave provisions. • Policy is reviewed at a minimum every 2 years.
2. Employees and their families have access to wellbeing support from the organisation.	• All employees and their family are provided with information on how to access support-based referral services for mental health, physical, and financial wellbeing support. • The organisation provides written guidelines, access to training, and toolkits to support wellbeing for all employees.
3. Mental health, physical and financial wellbeing support is promoted and practiced, there are examples of wellbeing support at every level of the organisation.	• The organisation uses varied communication methods to promote mental health, physical, and financial wellbeing support for all employees and their families within the organisation. • There are examples of family wellbeing support having a positive impact on employees via employee stories.
4. A Family and Domestic Abuse and Violence Policy/Framework is produced in the organisation.	• Organisational policies and support are in place, including paid and unpaid leave provisions, for all employees experiencing or using family and domestic abuse or violence. • Policy is reviewed at a minimum every 2 years.
5. Support is promoted and practiced to assist in instances of Family and Domestic Abuse and Violence.	• The organisation actively promotes awareness of the policy and the supports made available to all employees. • The organisation demonstrates zero tolerance by creating a workplace culture that supports employees experiencing/ perpetuating violence and by acting on all forms of family and domestic abuse and violence that may occur in the workplace. • Support includes confidential communication channels and records management, paid leave, referral services and access to Employee Assistance Program/Psychology services.
6. A Sexual Harassment, Bullying, and Violence at work Policy/Framework is produced in the organisation.	• Organisational policies and support are in place for all employees experiencing workplace bullying, harassment, and violence. • Policy is reviewed at a minimum every 2 years.

Family Wellbeing Standards (2/2)

Embedded support to promote wellbeing of employees and their families.

Standards	Criteria Summary
7. Support is promoted and practiced to assist in instances of workplace Sexual Harassment, Bullying, and Violence.	• The organisation actively promotes a safe workplace for all employees, and demonstrates zero tolerance by creating a workplace culture that supports employees and acts on all forms of workplace harassment, bullying, and violence. • Support includes training, written guidelines, conflict resolution, mediation, support for victims, and consequences for perpetrators. • To demonstrate commitment to action, anonymised examples of conflict resolution are showcased.
8. Leaders are enabled to support and embed policies and practices that support family wellbeing.	• The organisation provides leaders with a framework and guidelines outlining how to manage and support employees with their wellbeing. • Leaders are required to facilitate and foster workplace practices that support employee wellbeing. • Leaders are provided with tools and/or training to respond to family wellbeing issues, and cases of family and domestic abuse/violence and sexual harassment, bullying and violence . • Leaders understand where they can seek support in managing wellbeing requirements.

Measurement Standards

Measurement enables assessment and amendment of organisational strategy, policies and practices to sustain this workplace culture.

Standards	Criteria Summary
1. The organisation has a mechanism to listen to employees and their ability to combine work and family life commitments.	• The organisation seeks feedback from employees on the effectiveness of policies, practices and wider enablement in providing the ability for them to combine their work and family commitments. • Employee feedback is sought on work life conflict and the role the organisation can play in reducing this conflict. • The organisation has measures in place to prevent gender, carer and parenting bias within remuneration review, career progression and hiring processes.
2. The organisation has processes in place to measure the outcomes of Family Friendly Workplace policies and practices.	• The organisation measures the impact of Family Friendly Workplaces on employee retention, absenteeism, productivity, mental health and wellbeing, and engagement. • The organisation is responsive to and acts on areas of unmet employee need to facilitate a Family Friendly Culture.
3. The organisation has processes in place to produce policy and practice changes based on the outcomes of their evaluations	• The organisation has a process in place to act on the feedback received from employees and their own internal measures of the effectiveness of the Family Friendly Policies and Practices. • The organisation is responsive to and acts on areas of unmet employee needs to facilitate a Family Friendly Culture. • The process is committed to and occurs regularly (ie. bi-annually, annually or six monthly). • A plan is in place to implement, monitor and evaluate the changes.

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FIND OUT MORE

The National Work + Family Standards have been developed in line with best practice research with input from strategic partners, diversity and inclusion, family wellbeing and other policy experts. Find out more about the Standards, recognition framework and certification process at www.familyfriendlyworkplaces.com

The future of work is family friendly.

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