

Nevada Commission for Women

Workforce Development Survey 2017 Executive Summary

“What do women need to successfully join the workforce and take care of their families?”

- “Childcare. Absolutely childcare. With the cost of childcare so high, for some mothers in two parent households it is cheaper for mom to stay home. For single mothers (like me), we can’t work without childcare. That becomes problematic when we make just enough to not qualify for a subsidy, leaving less money for food, clothes, etc. ...those of us that make a little more (than minimum wage) are still unable to afford childcare.”
- “Women with children need reliable affordable childcare to be able to go to work. Once employed, they need flexibility and paid time off to care for their children if they get sick. They need training and skills to help them get good paying jobs.”
- “Flexibility in the workplace – policies that are pro-family for both parents so it doesn’t always fall on Mom to be the care giver.”
- “Support from the community in the same way men and boys are supported and encouraged.”
- “More flexibility in the work force and to be able to make the same income as male employees. Single parents should not have to rely on government assistance to provide for their children.”
- “A path to re-entering the workforce. I have a bachelor’s and a decade of experience and can’t even get an interview for a low-level job. It’s very frustrating!”
- “(A young woman needs) job opportunities with potential growth, childcare services while she learns, and programs for fathers to become more engaged with raising a child. Strong relationships need to be built to build a web of support allowing the young woman to flourish. Referring a woman to one program, and another, and another and yet another without linking her to a strong compassionate mentor to guide her through her journey, can be exhausting and devastating.”

The Nevada Commission for Women was established by Nevada Revised Statute 233I and provided the power and duty to study the changing and developing roles of women in society, including the socioeconomic factors that influence the status of women, and recommend proposed legislation. The Commission is a 10-member board appointed by the Governor and receives staff assistance from the Nevada Department of Administration.

Workforce development is one of Governor Sandoval's significant initiatives this session and so the Nevada Commission for Women decided to research the topic and developed a survey to study one specific aspect of workforce development – women in the workplace. The Commission narrowed its focus further to explore the challenges unique to women *with families* in the workforce, or those trying to enter the workforce.

The primary focus and purpose of the study was one open-ended question that asked people to provide the answer in their own words to this question: “What do women need to successfully join the workforce and take care of their families?”

2016-17 Study and Report

In 2016, over 500 people participated when the Commission held a series of workshops and circulated an electronic survey to find out answers. Read what people told us below...

The top six issues identified are: 1) Child Care; 2) Cultural Support and Encouragement; 3) equal pay; 4) Flexible hours; 5) Family Leave, and 6) Education. When asked what women need to be successful at work and take care of their families, hundreds of women in Nevada listed child care as their top need. Some highlights and themes:

Quality, affordable child care is the number one priority for women with families:

The cost of child care is the biggest concern and has become an enormous barrier to a women's success in the workplace. Working women often struggle to afford child care because the cost consumes most of their paycheck.

- “[Moms] need financial assistance in caring for children while “in training” and in transition. It took every cent of my school loans to pay for day care for my kids when I was in my Teaching internship for 6 months.”
- One father explained, “We need quality affordable child care. We need to know our children are being taken care of by highly trained individuals. My wife has stayed home for the past two and a half years because we could not afford child care for our twins until now. It is not affordable and even though we barely make it on one income it's the best we can do.”
- Childcare in the first five years of life is a major drain on monthly income. The pressure it places on working families creates immense financial and occupational strain, especially on working class single mothers.
- Economically, mothers need to be able to afford their general living expenses which include food, housing and utilities, clothing, health care, transportation, and miscellaneous household and personal expenses. For a single mother, these costs can become staggering. In total, it would cost a single mother with an infant and 4-year-old living in the Las Vegas area approximately \$13,918 a year to pay for the bare minimum costs of food, housing, clothing, health care, and transportation.

We need a system that incentivizes work and supports families, not a system that forces families into heart-breaking choices:

- “I have teacher friends who have quit to care for disabled children because their welfare benefits were greater than their salary.”
- “I needed to split up my family, my significant other is up in Carson with our daughter because he couldn't find a job in Vegas, and I need to be in Vegas to get my law degree so that we can have at least one of us earning a functioning living wage.”
- “I'm a master's degree holding professional, but the cost of childcare is a huge barrier to me finding full time employment.”
- “Women need to know that they are supported in their jobs just like anyone else.”
- “Access to affordable health insurance. Unfortunately, this is my current driver. I will most likely take a job well below my ability level simply to secure health insurance.”
- “Douglas County makes their new employees wait 60 days+ for insurance benefits. For a single parent like myself with a medically complex child that means not being able to take a job. ... it came down to insurance for my child or a job.”
- “I was told by my manager and director that I was only to take time off to care for my children if my children were so sick that they needed medical attention.

Women need understanding employers and flexible opportunities to update their skills:

- “[Women need] a willingness by employers to be somewhat flexible so we can be mothers when we need to be. Kid stuff doesn't always happen from 5 to 9 and on weekends.”
- “I find that the greatest need for women to successfully join the workforce is the opportunity to learn a skill outside of the educational system.”
- As one mom put it, she needs “short-term and low-cost educational opportunities that can be reasonably achieved.” She explained “Long-term degrees can seem unattainable. **As a mom, if I could "hunker down" for 6 months knowing that there was a light at the end of the tunnel, well, I can do that!**”
- “[Nevada State College] offers the ability for a working mom to obtain a degree almost exclusively online. A working mother cannot go to school, provide for her family, and be physically available to her family ...if going to school requires physical attendance. If more online degree options were available at an affordable price, more women would be able to better themselves by obtaining a four-year degree.”

Fair pay and fair treatment were major themes:

- We need “fair treatment and recognition for the job we do as women before we get into the workplace as small business owners. **Every woman with a family is running a small business.**”

To view the full survey, written responses and public testimony, visit the Commission for Women's website: <http://admin.nv.gov/CommissionForWomen/>.

| “What do women need to successfully join the workforce and take care of their families?” | Result ranking of 373 survey responses |
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| 1. Child Care | 52.2% 195 |
| 2. Equal Pay | 28.15% 105 |
| 3. Cultural Support and Encouragement (i.e. change in social attitudes; more father involvement; employers that make family the top priority; equal value of a woman’s mind, self-confidence; improve family expectations of women; break the cycle to notice warning signs of unhealthy relationships; employers who treat their employees as valued partners; the mindset holds women back – the difference between a job and a career, etc.) | 27.61% 103 |
| 4. Flexible Hours | 22.7% 85 |
| 5. Family Leave (Includes Maternity Leave, Personal Sick Leave and Family Sick Leave) | 22.22% 83 |
| 6. Education | 18.28% 68 |
| 7. Skills Training | 12.33% 46 |
| 8. Medical Benefits | 7.77% 29 |
| 9. Other (The category code “Other” was used several ways which is why the percentage is so high. It was used to indicate when a response that was already coded with one of the allotted 8 category options elaborated on an aspect of that topic. For instance, the topic of Child Care has various aspects such as cost, proximity to home or work, convenient hours, and/or quality of care. When a response provided more information than just the main topic, it was coded “Other” as a supplemental code. Responses were also coded “Other” to indicate when a completely different response was provided that didn’t “fall into” an already prescribed category heading, such as a response indicating “Transportation” was what women needed.) | 53.35% 199 |

2017 Nevada Commission for Women Members:

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