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EXCELLENT HEALTHCARE WORKERS/EXCELLENT PARENTS PROJECT

The Challenge: The conflict between work and parental responsibilities is a critical issue for unions and employers nationwide. Because healthcare is a growing sector of the economy with a high proportion of employees who are single parents and adult caregivers, the issue of work-family balance is of particular importance. In the face of increasing demands for cost reductions and quality improvements, hospitals must find innovative ways to ensure that patients' needs are met with well-trained, reliable employees who can juggle family obligations and meet the challenges of an extremely demanding workplace. Workers with unreliable child care arrangements or those who experience incidents of work-family collision often have more problems with hours and attendance, performance, and retention.

The Solution: The Excellent Health Workers/Excellent Parent Project was developed to demonstrate how low-cost labor management-driven strategies for resolving work and family conflicts can lead to better outcomes for employers, workers, and patients in healthcare settings. Through this project, the LMP delivered a series of workshops to employees (to help them manage their family responsibilities more effectively) and to union delegates and management (to help them use best practices to navigate problem solving related to work-family issues). Three Brooklyn-based hospitals, including the Brooklyn Hospital Center, Lutheran Medical Center, and Maimonides Medical Center, participated in the workshops. The LMP team also created a practical resource guide to assist parents and caregivers in their daily lives.

The Results: From December 2010 to March 2012, a total of 136 parents/employees and 175 supervisors/union leaders from the three participating hospital sites attended the LMP workshops. Participants relayed the following feedback on their evaluation forms:

Positive Feedback: The participants overwhelmingly agreed that the Excellent Health Workers/Excellent Parent Project provided them with new tools and knowledge to more effectively balance their work and family obligations.

"This workshop was extremely helpful because it gave me tools to be more assertive and dig deeper in my search for more affordable child care."

"Now I know to review my contract with my child care provider and make sure I visit my provider's home with the check list the Center for Children's Initiatives provided."

"As a result of workshop I will be sure to create a backup plan for emergencies and school holidays."

"Now I know how important it is to visit each provider in person before selecting a day care center."