

## Family-Friendly Policies from Family-Friendly Companies

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Smart companies know that keeping employees happy — in and out of the workplace — translates to business success. Many are now focusing on creating family-friendly programs and a company culture that allows for better work-life balance, including flexible schedules and generous family-leave policies. These four companies show how putting employee needs first can pay off; in fact, all were named to Working Mother magazine's "100 Best Companies" for 2006.

### Ernst & Young

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#### Tax, accounting, and financial services

#### New York, NY

**Leave Policy:** Six weeks of fully paid parental leave to the primary caregiver (male or female) and two week of fully paid leave for the secondary caregiver for either a biological child or an adopted child. Birth mothers who have been employed three months or longer are eligible for short-term, paid disability for an additional six weeks.

**Flex Appeal:** Approximately 10 percent of Ernst & Young's 27,000 U.S. employees use flex time. New moms may make a gradual reentry to the workplace, with a compressed or redistributed work week, reduced hours or some combination of these options.

**Company Approach:** Ernst & Young offers a wide range of support services for new parents, ranging from its liberal time-off policy (unpaid leave is offered in addition to its paid programs) to backup childcare to parenting support groups. In addition, it provides full benefits for any employee working at least 20 hours per week and has instituted employee resources such as concierge services and EY Assist, a resource and referral program.

**Management Benefit:** "The last time we looked, 84 percent of women returned to work, and that's a very high percentage," says Maryella Gockel, flexibility strategy leader for Ernst & Young. "Some of it is just the ease of returning, the ability to go on a reduced schedule if you chose to; we are very proactive around what we call flexible work arrangements." Ernst & Young doesn't penalize workers for unconventional work schedules, either: "Since 1993, we've promoted well over 100 women who've worked a reduced schedule to our most senior levels," Gockel notes. "So women realize that just because you're on a reduced schedule it doesn't mean you've hit a dead-end in your career."

# Microsoft

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## Computer software and services developer

### Redmond, WA

**Leave Policy:** Parents are eligible to take up to 12 weeks of Parental Leave to care for a newborn, newly adopted or recently placed foster child. The employee has 12 months from the birth of the child/placement in the home to take the leave. If the leave is taken within the first 6 months of the birth, the first four weeks of this leave are paid at 100 percent of base salary. Birth mothers may take up to an eight-week leave of absence, paid at 100 percent of base salary.

**Flex Appeal:** All employees, including new parents, have the opportunity to work from home or remotely and create a flexible schedule that allows them to make their own hours. Job sharing is also an option.

**Company Approach:** "Family-friendly programs are always top of mind," says Teresa Melcher, Senior Benefits Manager for Microsoft. The list of support options for new parents is extensive. Among them: monthly sessions for new and expecting parents on topics ranging from pre-natal care through the first year of life; discounts on daycare tuition and a backup child-care program; private New Mother's Rooms for lactation and milk storage; a dedicated leave-of-absence program manager to assist employees and managers with questions and support along the way; and a service that provides employees with a personal consultant on topics such as childcare, child development, and special-needs children.

"Microsoft also provides managers with an extensive FAQ resource on effectively managing parental leave issues and assisting their employees with a smooth transition back to work," Melcher says.

**Management Benefit:** "Our employees are our number-one asset, so it's extremely important to the company to provide valued benefits," Melcher says. "These programs set us apart, and help Microsoft retain our valued employees and attract new talent."

# Aflac

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## Supplemental insurance leader

### Columbus, GA

**Leave Policy:** Six full and six partially paid job-guaranteed weeks off for all salaried employees when they deliver or adopt. Staffers who have been with the firm for five years receive full pay for the entire leave. Part-time employees may be eligible for leave if the required length of service is met.

**Flex Appeal:** The company provides a variety of flexible work options including varying shifts, such as 6 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. There's also a weekend schedule of

12 hours per day Thursday through Saturday. Aflac also has a tele-work program that allows some employees to work from home.

**Company Approach:** Keeping its primarily female employee base happy is a high priority. As a result, the company offers amenities such as a lactation room for new mothers, pre- and post-adoption placement counseling, and an on-site resource center that gives employees access to information on work and family issues. Perhaps one of its most impressive perks is in its day-care offerings: Aflac offers the largest on-site child-care facility in Georgia and provides extended child care between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and 11:30 p.m. The center serves more than 600 children and provides certified and experienced caregivers; an open-door policy for parents to come visit during the work day; a pre-K program; transportation to and from school for school-aged children; and an after-school program including dance, gymnastics, and arts and crafts.

**Management Benefit:** "Aflac's workforce is 70 percent women, and approximately 70 percent of that female employee base is comprised of working mothers," says Mechell Clark, media relations manager for Aflac. More than 51 percent of the company's supervisors are women with children; among VPs and higher, the number is 30 percent. "A solid retention strategy for working mothers is vital to our business," Clark adds.

## Wyeth

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### Pharmaceutical and health-care company

#### Madison, NJ

**Leave Policy:** Wyeth provides eight weeks of time off with full pay for childbirth and then an additional week with pay for newborn care; more time is offered if there are complications. The employee may then take an unpaid leave period of up to a year. For the first 12 weeks of absence, the employee is guaranteed a return to the same or a comparable job according to Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) standards.

**Flex Appeal:** Flextime is widely used by Wyeth employees. Once ready to return to work, mothers often phase-back on a part-time basis or telecommute for a few days a week until child-care arrangements settle. Alternatives such as job-sharing and telecommuting are available, but according to the company fewer than 1 percent of employees elect to use these more challenging flexible work arrangements.

**Company Approach:** Wyeth places a premium on finding and retaining good employees. In fact, according to Working Mother magazine, managers are held accountable for attracting, developing and retaining employees, particularly women and minorities, and their annual salary increases depend on success in these areas. The company offers a variety of programs and services for new or expectant parents, including a company intranet with detailed information about leave and benefit plans; a lactation program and private lactation rooms; and life-management resources that provide confidential assistance in a variety of areas including family caregiving.

In addition, the company provides two on-site child-care centers that serve more than 200 children, childcare discounts, and a dependent-care assistance plan, in which Wyeth matches up to \$100 per month for daycare expenses. On average, says Nancy Konta, executive director of HR Policies and Programs, new mothers stayed out an average of 19 weeks for leave, and most returned to work.

**Management Benefit:** "Only 11 percent of new mothers left the company following leave to have a baby," Konta says. "The majority of our new mothers return to work full-time and often to new positions. Last year, shortly after she returned to work, a new mother of quadruplets was promoted to manager of Vaccines & Inside Sales."

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