

Balancing WORK & Family

A Report on the Policies and Practices of Employers in Greater Kansas City

In today's competitive labor market, it is increasingly important for employers to recognize the challenges their employees face in balancing work and family responsibilities. Employers who implement policies and practices to support families can gain a competitive edge over those who do not.

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Mid-America Regional Council's Metropolitan Council on Early Learning and the Midwest WholeChild Development Group, recently conducted a survey of chamber members to assess current employer supports for balancing work and family issues. Technical Assistance was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau Region VII.

By examining current practices and policies of employers in the region, the survey sponsors hope to heighten awareness of the need for such policies and spark discussion about how employers can support a family-friendly work environment.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey was completed online by 101 employers from eight counties in the region — Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri, and Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Survey respondents ranged from very small, family-owned businesses to large, multi-location corporations with thousands of employees.

Results from the survey indicate that many local companies are taking steps to help their employees balance work and family issues, but much more can be done.

CURRENT SUPPORTS FOR BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

Currently, 69 percent of survey respondents have policies or services designed specifically to assist employees with balancing work and family. Another 28 percent have no such policies or services, while 3 percent plan to implement such policies or services in the near future.

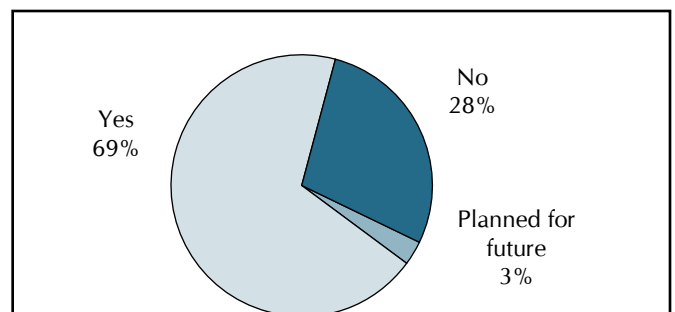
What is a "Family-Friendly" Workplace?

"Family friendly" is a broad term referring to a work environment that seeks to support the employee's needs outside the workplace. Specifically, family-friendly workplaces establish and sustain programs and policies meant to ease the stress inherent in managing both job and family responsibilities. Child care and dependent care benefits, education and family leave, job flexibility and wellness benefits are among commonly cited family-friendly practices found in today's workplaces.



— Midwest WholeChild Development Group

Over 80 percent of respondents said that the decision makers in their companies rate offering support to help employees balance work and family issues as very or somewhat important. Only 4 percent felt that offering such support was not important, with an additional 5 percent choosing somewhat unimportant and 9 percent rating employer supports as neither important nor unimportant.



Does your company currently have any policies or services designed specifically for assisting employees with balancing work and family?

Survey Responder Comments:

“Our whole culture is based on family and always has been.”

“We offer a baby-at-work program for infants up to six months.”

“We are a small company, so many options cannot be offered.”

“We offer adoption leave, unpaid personal leave, FMLA, EAP, fitness subsidies and exercise classes.”

“We offer reimbursement for back-up daycare if the employee’s regular child care provider falls through or is sick.”

“We offer an infant room for new mothers to bring infants to work until they are ready to send them to daycare . . . Employees may bring their infants to work if no daycare is available or the child is ill.”

“We use individual counseling to encourage family-friendly workplaces.”

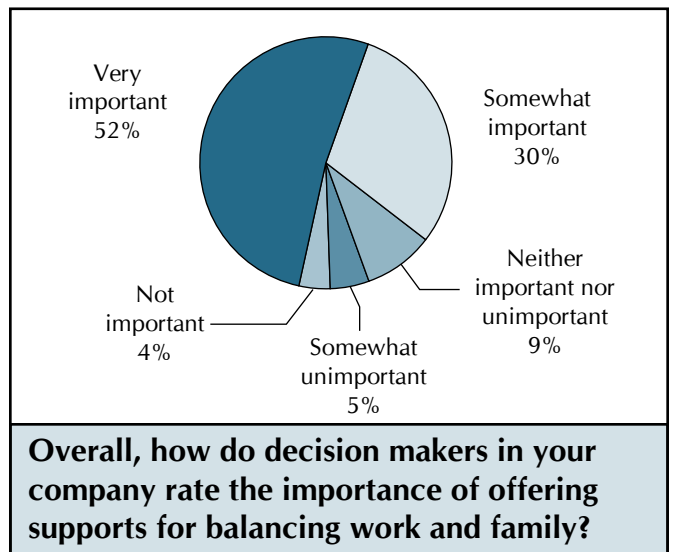
“Participation in our EAP is highly encouraged. Our policies also reflect ‘balanced’ approaches to work and life.”

“We cover maternity leave for six weeks through our short-term disability policy.”

“Adoption or paternity leave is covered through either timebank or unpaid FMLA.”

PROMOTING FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Companies that offer supports for balancing work and family use a variety of means to inform employees about their programs. The most commonly used promotional tool is providing information about family-friendly policies to new employees during orientation — something 55 percent of respondents do regularly.

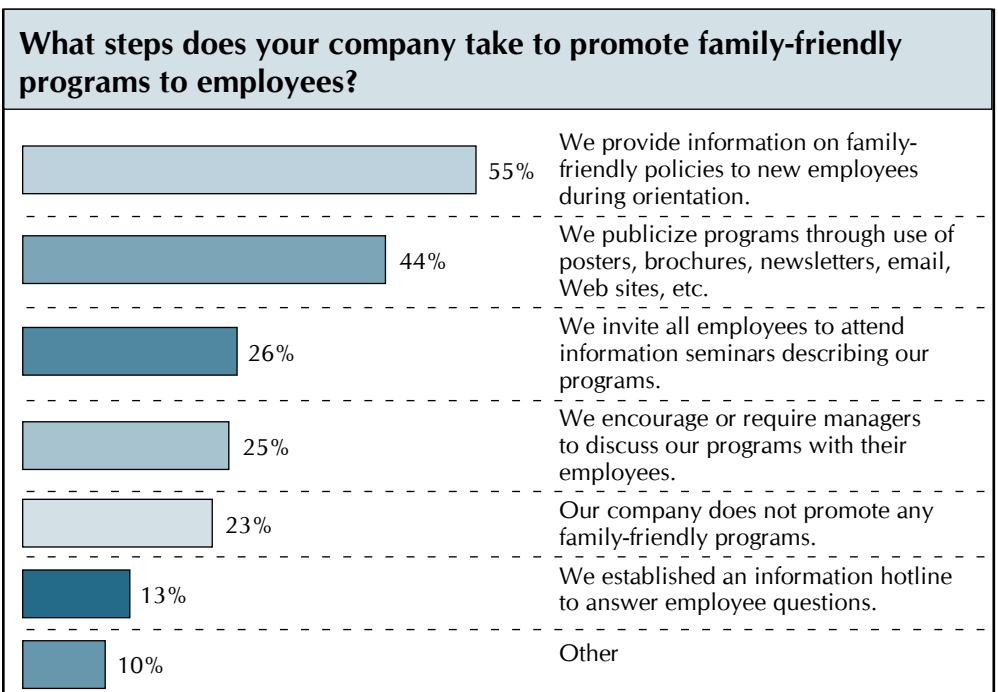


Many companies also publicize their programs to employees through posters, brochures, newsletters, e-mail and Web sites.

About a quarter of respondents said that they invite employees to attend informational seminars describing their programs and encourage managers to discuss their family support programs and policies with employees.

Only 13 percent of companies provide an information hotline to answer employee questions about family-friendly programs and policies. Several employers use outside Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services to help employees with work and family issues.

Of 101 respondents, 23 reported that their companies do not promote any family-friendly programs.



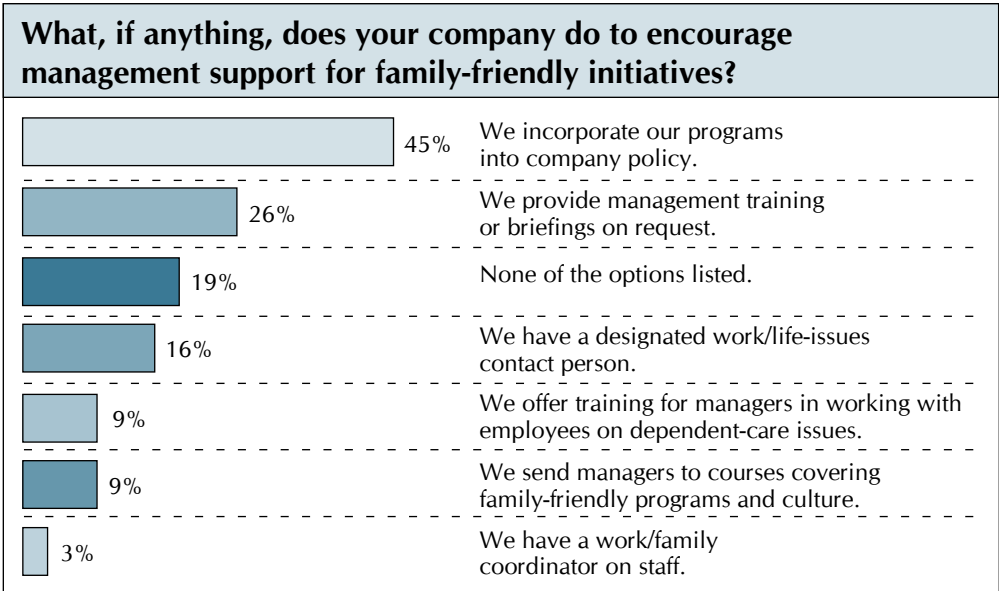
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR FAMILY-FRIENDLY INITIATIVES

Management support for family-friendly initiatives is key to their success. But fewer than half of the respondents indicated they used any means to encourage that management support. The method most commonly used — by 45 percent of respondents — is to incorporate family-friendly programs into company policy.

While 26 percent of companies said they will provide management training or briefings on request, only 9 percent send their managers to courses covering family-friendly programs and culture. Three percent have a work/family coordinator on staff, and 16 percent have designated a specific contact person for work/life issues.

Several companies make use of their EAPs to encourage management support, and one respondent has formed a Work Life Committee to address these issues. Another responded that this is personalized on a case-by-case basis.

Of the total respondents, 19 percent said they do not do anything to encourage management support for family-friendly initiatives. One respondent noted “We have absolute universal buy-in. No need for lots of promotion or ‘selling’ the idea.”

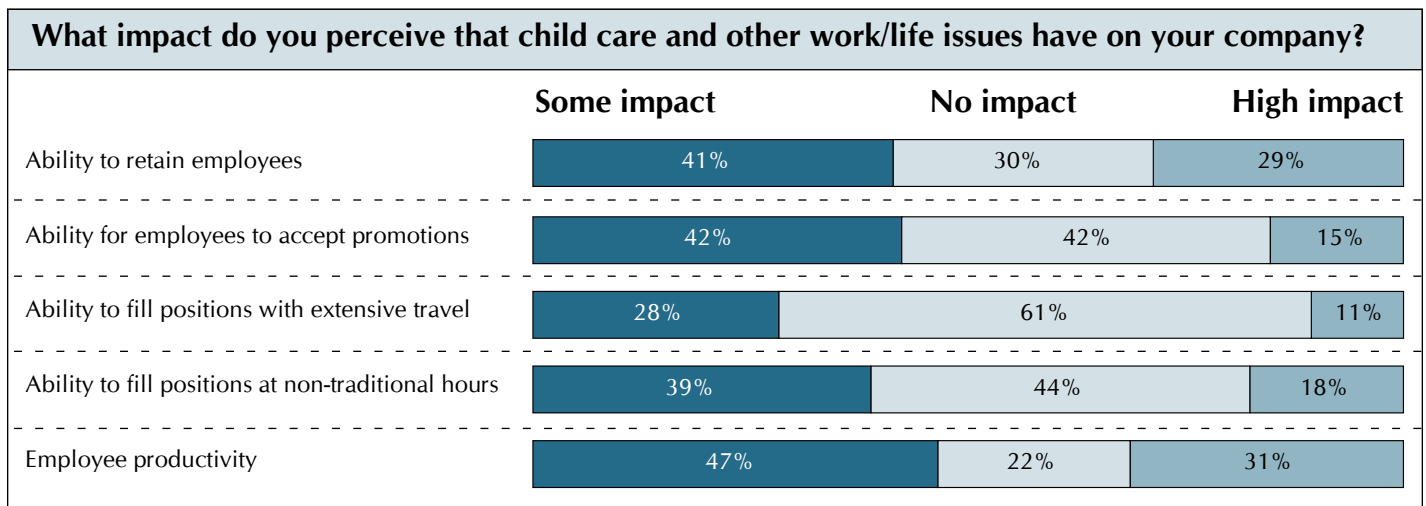


PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEES’ WORK/LIFE ISSUES ON BUSINESSES

Most companies recognize that child care and other work/life issues can affect worker productivity, with only 22 percent of respondents stating that they see no impact on productivity.

A majority also perceive that these issues have either some impact or a high level of impact on their ability to retain employees and fill positions that require non-traditional work hours.

Less than half of the survey respondents felt that work/life issues had an impact on their ability to fill positions that require extensive travel.



CURRENT SUPPORTS FOR BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY

Work Schedule Flexibility

Maternity Leave	86%
Personal days off from work	86%
Sick leave pay for family member illness	72%
Paternity Leave	64%
Flexible workplace (e.g. working at home).....	54%
Part-time return to work options for all employees	51%
Paid time-off bank	47%
Compressed work week (e.g. four 10-hour days).....	45%
Phase-back schedule after parental leave	43%
Paid time off to seek elder care	38%
Telecommuting	37%
Paid time off to seek child care	35%
Job sharing	32%
Option to buy/sell vacation time.....	28%
Key management positions open to part-time employees	19%
Ability to contribute unused paid time off to coworkers.....	19%

Financial Supports

Pre-Tax Dependent Care Assistance Plan (DCAP)	56%
Adoption or foster care aid	22%
Child care financial assistance (subsidy, discount).....	11%
Child care reimbursement for business travel or overtime.....	5%
Elder care financial assistance (subsidy, discount).....	4%



Information and Education

Company sponsored work-family social events.....	66%
Employee assistance program (EAP)	54%
Handbook/brochure of organization/company's work/life policies/programs	48%
Bulletin boards/kiosks.....	44%
Well baby program.....	33%
Provide information on how to choose quality care.....	18%
Publicize information about finding and paying for child care	18%
Dependent care resource and referral services (R&R)	17%
Parenting seminars	15%
Work-family seminars.....	15%
Work-family resource library	14%
Work-family support groups	9%
Work-family newsletter.....	8%
Child care information fair.....	5%

Child Care Services

On-site child care	12%
Summer and/or school holiday child care or programs	12%
Back-up child care service	6%
Reserved slots in child care centers.....	6%
Child care for mildly ill children	5%
Expanded hours child care center (before 6:00 a.m., after 6:00 p.m.)	3%
Consortium child care center	2%

Leave of Absence Options

Family leave for short-term dependent needs beyond legal requirements for your size company	40%
Parental leave beyond legal requirements for your size company	32%
Sabbatical leave.....	26%

BECOMING MORE FAMILY FRIENDLY

Most businesses recognize the need to implement family-friendly programs, but many feel they do not have the resources to do so. Small businesses, in particular, may find it difficult to provide all of the supports for balancing work and family that they would like.

Midwest WholeChild Development Group offers a list of simple, inexpensive ways that businesses can become more family friendly:

- Allow employees time to eat lunch at their children's schools, or to participate in school-related activities with their children during the day.
- Offer flexible work options to help employees meet family responsibilities.
- Allow "floating holidays" for employees to take time off during holidays that are culturally important to them.
- Allow staff to take annual leave in hourly or half-day increments.
- Implement a policy to stay in touch with employees who are on leave after having a child or adopting a child, or on an extended leave due to illness.
- Sponsor in-service sessions, brown bag lunches, etc. on topics of interest to employees. Do not assume what their needs and interests are — ask.
- Develop a support network for new parents or other employees who face common issues. Provide space for them to get together.
- Sponsor regular events for employees and their families.
- Introduce a workplace policy for employees who are nursing mothers.

OTHER RESOURCES

WholeFamily Matters: Family Friendly Workplace Program

Through WholeFamily Matters: Family Friendly Workplace Program, the Midwest WholeChild Development Group will work closely with area employers to assess their employees' needs and develop, enhance and implement family-friendly workplace policies.

The initiative was piloted with three local companies to develop the program components. The next phase of the project will make the program available to additional Greater Kansas City employers in 2005. For more information about the resources offered, contact Nancy Mitchell at the Midwest WholeChild Development Group at 913/341-6200 or nmitchell@mwdg.org.

Family Care Choices and ASAP Care

Family Care Choices, an enhanced resource and referral service, is available to employers as a part of an employee assistance program (EAP) through The Family Conservancy. Family Care Choices matches parents' child care needs with a database of providers and calls those providers to see what openings are available. This information, along with educational materials on choosing quality child care, is given to parents so they can make an informed decision. The Family Conservancy has provided this service for over 10 years and currently has 10 companies enrolled in the program.

ASAP Care is an EAP service offered to employers who choose to subsidize emergency or backup child care so their employees can be at work whenever

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR WORK AND FAMILY ISSUES



Families and Work Institute	www.familiesandwork.org
Work and Family Connection	www.workfamily.com
Family Support America.....	www.frca.org (select topic: work and family)
Juggling Work and Family	www.pbs.org/workfamily
Keeping the People, Inc.	www.keepingthepeople.com
Child Care Source	www.childcaresource.org
Midwest WholeChild Development Group.....	www.mwdg.org (select topic: workplace)
National Center for Fathering.....	www.fathers.com

possible. When school is canceled or a provider is sick, parents who don't have vacation time or must attend an important meeting can use this service to avoid missing work.

For more information, call The Family Conservancy at 913/342-1110 or visit www.thefamilyconservancy.org.

Flexible Options for Women

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, Region VII, is developing a mentorship program to match businesses interested in starting or enhancing flexible workplace options to improve family-friendly work environments with businesses who already have flexible policies in place.

The project is designed to help businesses develop workplace flexibility policies and programs. It brings together business leaders who volunteer to serve as mentors and business owners who are interested in developing flexible workplace policies and programs. These businesses will learn about successes and challenges of implementing flexible work policies and programs through group and individual mentoring. In addition, roundtable discussions and Virtual Conference Calls will focus on topics such as trends in workplace flexibility, challenges to flexible work arrangements and best practices.

For more information about the Flexible Options for Women program, contact Rose Kemp, Women's Bureau regional administrator, at kemp.rose@dol.gov, or Janet W. Watson, director of workforce solutions/ minority business development at the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, at watson@kcchamber.com.

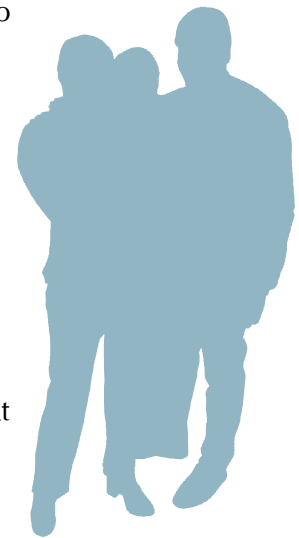
CONCLUSION

The majority of respondents to this survey indicated they do have policies and services designed specifically to assist employees with balancing work and family. Also, a large percentage of respondents believe it is important to offer support to help employees with work/life issues.

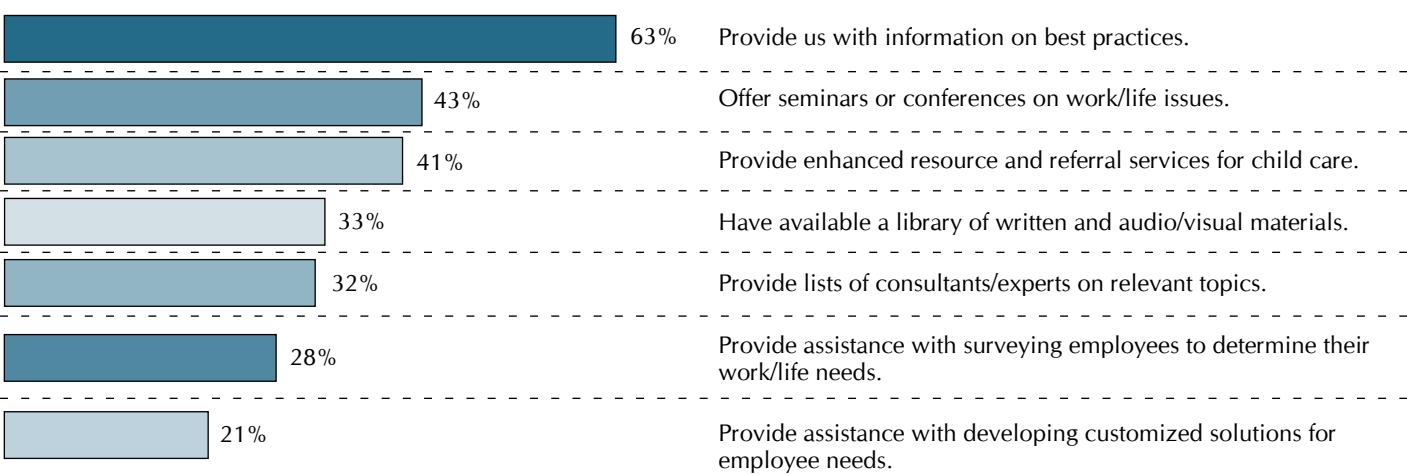
It is also important to note that most companies participating in this survey believe work/life issues have a significant impact on their employees' productivity and on the companies' ability to retain employees.

A large number of respondents expressed an interest in obtaining more information regarding child care, balancing work and life issues, and best practices.

The survey clearly demonstrates the need for more support for those trying to implement family-friendly workplaces. While a variety of resources are currently available to companies in the Kansas City community that seek to support their valued employees, community leaders must continue to work together to raise awareness and provide helpful solutions and resources to employers, employees and their families.



How can the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, MARC's Metropolitan Council on Early Learning, the U.S. Department of Labor — Women's Bureau, and Midwest WholeChild Development Group help your company address child care and other work/life related issues?



ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The online survey was completed in late 2004 by a total of 101 employers, ranging from small businesses with a single location to large companies with multiple locations.

All eight counties in the bistate Kansas City region were represented. Responding employer locations are broken down by county as follows:

Missouri counties:

Jackson.....	70
Platte.....	11
Ray.....	3
Cass.....	5
Clay.....	10

Kansas counties:

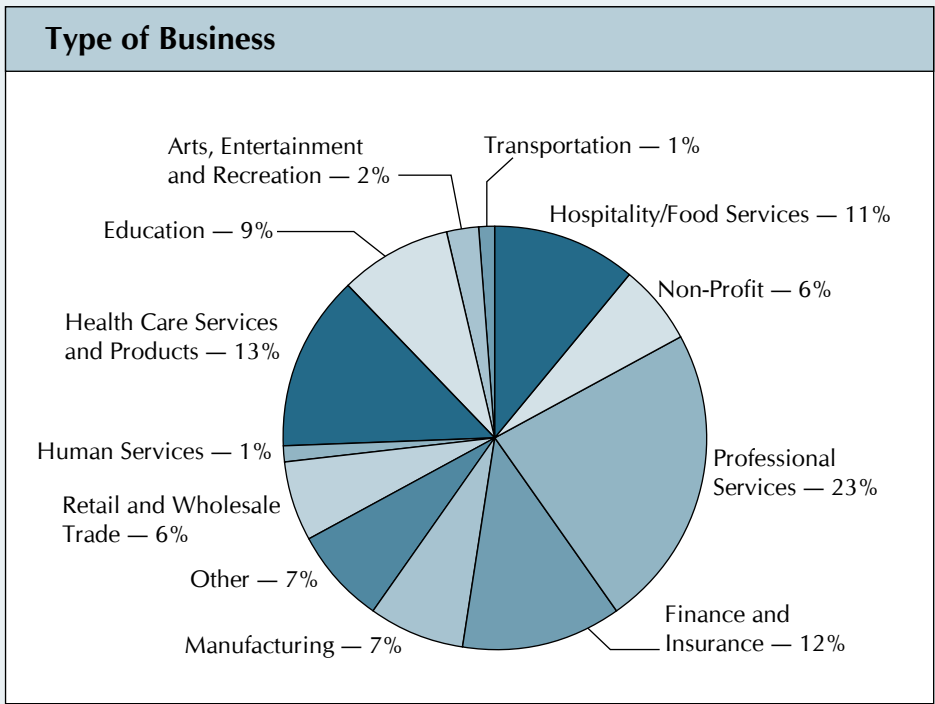
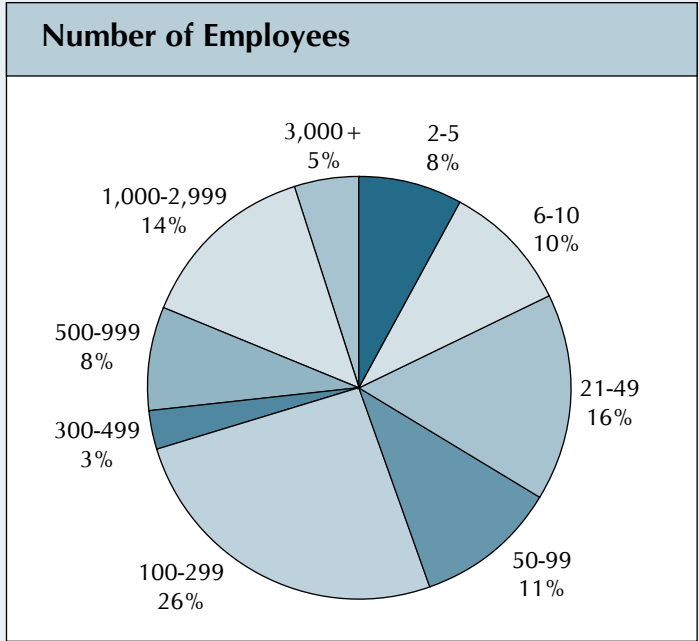
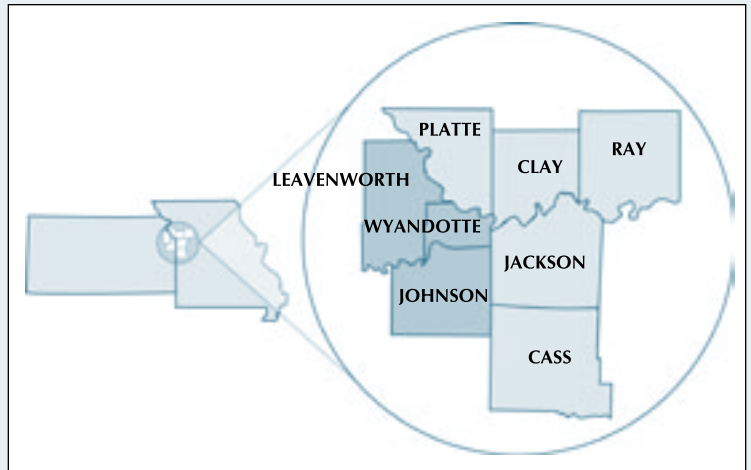
Wyandotte.....	11
Leavenworth.....	3
Johnson.....	41

The survey respondents varied widely in company size, from 12 businesses with fewer than five employees each to seven businesses with more than 3,000 employees each. The heaviest concentration was in the 100-to-299 employee range, with 38 employers falling into this category.

Professional service organizations made up the largest business category among respondents, with 23 percent. Other common types of businesses included health care services and products, 13 percent; finance and insurance, 12 percent; and hospitality/food services, 11 percent.

Employers completed the survey on the Web site of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce. Results were tabulated by the Research Services Department of the Mid-America Regional Council.

Technical Assistance was provided by the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau Region VII; the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce; and the Midwest WholeChild Development Group.





Women's Bureau, Region VII
U.S. Department of Labor
1100 Main, Suite 845
Kansas city, Missouri 64105
Phone 816/426-6108 • Fax 816/426-6107
www.dol.gov/wb



Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce
2600 Commerce Tower
911 Main Street
Kansas City, MO 64105
Phone 816/221-2424 • Fax 816/221-7440
www.kcchamber.com



Midwest WholeChild Development Group
8001 Conser, Suite 280
Overland Park, KS 66204
Phone 913/341-6200 • Fax 913/341-2957
www.mwdg.org



Metropolitan Council on Early Learning
600 Broadway, Suite 300
Kansas City, MO 64105
Phone 816/474-4240 • Fax 816/421-7758
www.marc.org/mcel



Mid-America Regional Council
600 Broadway, Suite 300
Kansas City, MO 64105
Phone 816/474-4240 • Fax 816/421-7758
www.marc.org/mcel