

## Frequently asked questions about Shared Care and ThirdPath Institute

### 1. What is Shared Care and can it work for all families?

Shared Care is a parenting model based on the principle that parents share the work of earning income and caring for family. In particular, parents share childcare duties and provide the majority of their children's care while continuing to work. Although there are many variations of Shared Care, we have found that all Shared Care families follow the same principles, they: redesign work to meet family needs; change solutions as children's needs change; create a shared involvement of earning income and caring for children; increase the opportunity of parental involvement. Whether two-parent households, single-parent households, or households where parents live apart, parents in Shared Care families work while continuing to create time for the important and rewarding job of caring for family.

### 2. Are fathers interested in Shared Care?

Survey after survey shows that fathers want to spend more time with their children. Sadly, the pressures fathers feel to work and support their families push many to deny this desire. Some wish that they had the special touch with their children that their wives seem to have. The pioneering fathers we have interviewed who have created substantial time to care for their children, report they, like their children's mothers, actually *have* that special touch with their children, simply due to spending significant

amounts of time with their children learning what works best and what their children need. Fathers using Shared Care have also been surprised to find that sharing the responsibilities of earning an income and caring for family have enhanced their relationships with their partners. Sharing the responsibilities of financially supporting a family allows both parents to understand the demands and joys of working and parenting, and to have a deeper understanding of each other's lives.

### 3. Do Shared Care parents use childcare?

Yes. High quality part time childcare can be a valuable resource for Shared Care parents. However, Shared Care parents also look for ways to have dad, mom, and extended family - people who have a long-term investment in the child's well-being, play an active role in the care of their child. Like other families, the way that care is arranged changes over time. Some Shared Care parents of infants and toddlers use part-time childcare while others choose not to. Then, as children grow older they become increasingly interested in spending time with other children. Therefore, as children grow older, a majority of Shared Care parents use part-time childcare or pre-school programs. When children become school-age, parents once again shift their care arrangements to provide before and after school care, or they provide care alongside more formal after-school care programs, or informal arrangements with family or friends.

#### **4. Do parents need to work part-time to Share Care?**

We do recommend, when possible, for parents with infants and toddlers to cut back their work hours. Young children need constant adult supervision and care, and a regular night's sleep for parents is never a sure thing. Some parents of young children can work full time and share primary care of their children, but it can often be particularly exhausting. However, as children grow older they become increasingly social and in less need of constant parental supervision. This means that Shared Care families with pre-school or school-aged children are likely to return to full time work, and only need to flex work hours to share in the care of their children.

#### **5. Does Shared Care relegate employees to the “parent track”?**

Women and men fear they may be risking their careers if they refuse to work overtime, ask to use flex-time, or request a schedule that is less than absolutely full time. However, we have found that parents who Share Care also experience unexpected career benefits – see the leadership section of our website to read stories of men and women who have advanced in their careers while practicing Shared Care. No matter their professional goals parents have found it's easier to focus at work when someone they know well and trust is involved in the care of their child. Some have even found innovative and more efficient ways to complete their work, and have been promoted or rewarded for the *quality* of their work, instead of the *quantity* of hours they worked. In the few cases when parents leave an employer unwilling to implement flexible schedules, some parents have found that leaving this situation was the needed catalyst to jump-start a new career, or start a business they had been dreaming about

#### **6. Who does Shared Care benefit?**

Shared Care is as good for parents as it is for their children. Shared Care parents have deep, ongoing relationships with their children and with their partners. Shared Care affords parents an opportunity to play with, teach, nurture, and guide children. In fact, Shared Care allows parents not only to lead balanced lives and to partner fully with their spouses or other adults, but also to really live their individual lives by expressing multiple aspects of themselves: involved parent, worker, spouse, romantic partner.

#### **7. Does ThirdPath only care about parents' needs?**

No. ThirdPath Institute wants to help people balance work and life across the lifecycle. People are interested in creating time for a variety of activities, including creating time for the care of aging parents, community involvement or the pursuit of a creative talent. However, we believe it is important to first prioritize addressing the needs of families. Parents feel stressed for time - time with their children, time for themselves and time with their partner. More than eighty percent of Americans will have children at some point in their lives; balancing work and family is a critical issue in our society. Lastly, through our work with families we believe we can create a blueprint for a new 21st century organization where all employees - from entry level to executive level - can create integrated work/life solutions.

***Interested in learning more?*** Couples can purchase our Work-Family Options Workbook or sign up for couples coaching to help “get on the same page” and create their own unique vision for balancing work and family.

Or, join our free “***Thursdays with ThirdPath***” calls to learn from the pioneering men and women who have succeeded at work while creating time for their lives outside of work.