



Business Smart.
Family Friendly.
Future Ready.

Family Forward NC Sees Exponential Growth as COVID-19 Exacerbates Need for Family-Friendly Workplaces



2020-2021 BIENNIAL REPORT

Since the pandemic began, COVID-19 has shaped our workplaces. Over the past two years, Family Forward NC scarcely lost a beat in our mission to create more family-friendly workplaces in NC. More than ever, employers need information and assistance to navigate remaining open, reopening, and attracting and retaining workers to avoid staffing shortages. And working parents need family-friendly workplaces as they balance caring for their families and workplace needs. Employee supports—especially for working parents—have been a key part of rebuilding and resilience. The significant rise in interest in Family Forward NC attests to the value of our COVID-responsive resources, virtual programming, and one-to-one guidance that contributes to NC’s economic recovery plan.

OUR 2020-2021 IMPACT

We Increased Employer Engagement



1,852 employers engaged
with us in 2020-2021 of 6,527 total
employers engaged since 2017



189,876 employers
received direct outreach
about our Return to Work
tools through our partner business and
economic development organizations

We Saw Exponential Growth in Interest and Use of the Guide to Family Forward Workplaces

67.6% of NC employers
changed their benefits
as a result of COVID-19



151% increase in visitors
looking for information on
paid family & medical leave
in 2020, compared to 2019

254% increase in visitors
looking for information
on paid parental leave in
2021, compared to 2020



22% increase in visitors
looking for information on
subsidized or reimbursed child
care in 2021, compared to 2020



and We Amplified Our Outreach



15 case studies
published or updated

224 new Twitter
followers from 2020-2021



PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

NC Department of Commerce Includes Family Forward NC in New Strategic Plan

When the North Carolina Department of Commerce released its 2021 Economic Development Strategic Plan, which calls for [investment in children and working families](#), it recognized Family Forward NC as a strategy for attracting talent and building a stronger economy for all North Carolinians.

“Every employer in just about every industry—whether here in North Carolina or elsewhere in the country—is facing challenges getting, not to mention keeping, enough qualified people for the positions they’re trying to fill. And the longer that goes on, the more economic growth we’re missing out on because companies can’t produce enough of the goods or services that the market is demanding,” said Chris Chung, CEO of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, which partnered with the North Carolina Department of Commerce on the plan.

“That’s where efforts like Family Forward NC can really help companies to figure out good solutions—especially smaller businesses that may not realize that some of these family-friendly workplace initiatives can actually be easier or more economical to implement than they realize.”

“The ability to find high-quality employees has clearly become the most important issue to ensure that North Carolina’s competitiveness. Based on data and evidence that is available, it shows that has been a barrier for many working parents, and especially for working mothers—not only working mothers but those who are taking care of maybe their elderly parents or loved ones. During the pandemic it just highlighted and, I think, really elevated to everyone’s attention the importance of not only other essential workers, but those who are in the child care space.”

Machelle Baker Sanders, Secretary of the NC Department of Commerce, at the 2021 NCWorks Partnership Conference



Family Forward NC Launches Rapid Response Program to Inspire Employers to be Business Smart, Family Friendly, and Future Ready During the COVID-19 Crisis

The continuing challenges of COVID-19 for families and workplaces means family-friendly workplace policies are essential now more than ever to the business bottom line and to child and family health and well-being.

That’s why, in August 2020, we launched our new [Rapid Response program](#). Rapid Response offers tools and resources along with no cost access to HR experts to assist small businesses and employers in hospitality and manufacturing identify industry-appropriate, family-friendly workplace benefits during reopening and to help employers and working parents build resilience during COVID.

Employers must plan for working parents to face additional child care challenges, school closures, and the need to take time off to care for themselves or a sick family member. Employers are also fighting for workers amidst the current labor shortage— [90,000 fewer North Carolinians](#) are working as of November 2021 than were working before the pandemic.

Family-friendly business practices help employers return to business and employees to return to work.

“I hear from some of my peers in the industry that some can’t open for service because they have such little staff,” said Eric Montagne of Raleigh’s Locals Oyster Bar, which offers a family sustaining wage, paid time off, and health insurance. “But we’re not facing that; both of our locations are open seven days a week.”



Family Forward NC Teams up with the NC Food & Beverage Podcast to Talk Family-Friendly Policies in the Restaurant Industry

Family Forward NC and the North Carolina Food & Beverage Podcast (NC F&B), hosted by food and beverage industry veterans Max Trujillo and Matthew Weiss, teamed up in 2020 to share how restaurants across the state are incorporating family-friendly practices to make their businesses more resilient and sustainable and their employees and their families feel supported.

On the NC Food & Beverage Podcast, Trujillo and Weiss talk with chefs, sommeliers, distillers, farmers and other prominent figures in North Carolina’s food and beverage industry. For this series, the hosts dove into the challenges of implementing family-friendly practices within the restaurant industry, and, with the help of FFNC, they [discussed the benefits and potential solutions.](#)

“Families are the cornerstone of the community,” explains North Carolina restaurant owner Ben Knight, [who is one of the featured guests.](#) “And restaurants are gathering places for families and the irony is they’ve been a miserable place to work for people who have family obligations.” Knight owns [Benny’s Big Time](#) in Wilmington and co-owns The Chef and the Farmer in Kinston with his wife, Vivian Howard.

“We have modeled our whole company culture after the idea that a happy team makes happy food and that makes happy guests,” Knight says. “We want our team to be happy and to feel supported outside of work. It’s created a tremendous amount of goodwill with our team.”

2022 AND BEYOND

In 2022, we will launch a Family Forward NC certification program, allowing NC employers to become certified as a family-friendly workplace. We are also expanding Family Forward beyond North Carolina by working with organizations in other states to adapt the work to their communities.

Engage with Us

familyforwardnc.com
[@familyforwardnc](https://twitter.com/familyforwardnc)



Family Forward NC is an initiative of the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation.

Thank you to our sponsors:

