

Employees' kids in the office: Does your company set rules?

Question: "I'm sympathetic with employees who have to juggle work and child care. But it becomes a distraction when employees bring in their kids for a couple hours (or longer on school holidays or summer). And it doesn't set a professional tone. Does your company have any policies or procedures to handle kids in the office?" – *Kristin, New Jersey*

Comments

We do not allow children to come to work for any reason. We are a medical facility so that is one of the reasons. Although we are sensitive to the situation it is not our responsibility to allow children to become a distraction during paid working hours. Too many things could happen also, like injuries to the child and interruptions to other working staff. We have had it all so now it is against policy.

Posted by: Jocelyn | September 21, 2007 at 12:59 PM

We don't have a policy and sometimes there are kids in the office. Usually, the parents are very good about keeping the kids quiet or out of the way. The older kids often help with stuffing envelopes or some other task. Occasionally, the kids can become noisy, but no one seems to take advantage and it doesn't happen very frequently or for long periods of time.

Posted by: Lisa | September 21, 2007 at 01:06 PM

Wow - I can be sympathetic when this needs to happen due to an extreme "emergency" but unless your business is a daycare center or offers daycare to its employees, it is EXTREMELY inappropriate to bring children to work! It's not only dangerous, but distracting and disruptive to any business environment. Before your employer allows this, I suggest they make sure of their legal liability where accidents and injuries are concerned - not only to the children themselves, but to any employee inadvertently put in the position of having to act as a result of a dangerous or non-monitored behavior.

Posted by: Jesse | September 21, 2007 at 01:25 PM

We don't have a policy that forbids kids from being in the office. When people do bring their kids to work, (most of the time) it is only for a couple of hours and because they had no other options. When there have been kids in the office, the parents are good at keeping them busy and quiet so there are minimal interruptions.

Posted by: | September 21, 2007 at 01:27 PM

We allow children to come to the office only if there is absolutely no other solution. They must sit in one of our break rooms and not interrupt anyone else. The employee is asked to bring something for them to do: color, games, etc. and there is also a TV in each break room so they can watch cartoons or other TV shows. We try to encourage employees to make other arrangements when possible, but sometimes it's just unavoidable and we would rather have the employee come to work.

Posted by: JackieF | September 24, 2007 at 08:55 AM

What are the ages and maturity levels of these children that are coming to work? Is it for a couple of hours after school or is it all day? Who is responsible if something happens while the child is at work. I personally do not think this is a good ideal for any reason. Yes, I have children and emergencies did crop up sometimes but I always made sure I had a backup to backup the backup. Plan ahead. I also did not have family near by to depend on. I had to think outside of the box. I found out about after school programs, Daycares (when they were younger) that took children in for a day or two only. My hairdresser's daughter. As my children became older they would walk to the library do their homework while there and then read, until I picked them up.

Posted by: | September 24, 2007 at 01:11 PM

Wow! whatever happened to the human touch? Granted children should not be allowed in construction sites, medical facilities, etc., however, most of us work in an desk job type of positions and a little consideration for the "unfortunate" is greatly appreciated. I personally have a child with chronic asthma. When she was very young, day care wouldn't take her when she was sick and school would allow her due to the congestion and cold which usually elated for a whole week. My company allowed me to bring her to work for 1/2 day and she would quietly sleep in my office on a daycare mat and then I would take the work home for the rest of the day. Because of this flexibility that I was given, with no questions of who's responsible if something should go wrong, (the parent should be since the parent brought the child); that cooperation from management has kept in this job for 10 years now, even though better offers elsewhere have come up. I have no family to rely on, no friends nearby - a company with this attitude was heaven-sent and I will be eternally grateful. If you want loyal employees to bend over backwards for your company, you need to be a a loyal employer and be flexible once in a while too! I am very grateful for the flexibility my firm has given me. To top that off, my child is very quiet and keeps herself busy and the management appreciates that!

Posted by: PGJ | September 28, 2007 at 01:51 PM

Kirstin, It sounds like the company you work for does not have a policy in place, which may be part of the problem. If you find the visits distracting, it is very possible that other employees feel the same way and the issue should be addressed. The company I work for allows short visitations because of appointments but the child(ren) must be accompanied at all times. We are in corporate headquarters and it is rare to hear of any complaints.

Posted by: Anita T. | September 28, 2007 at 02:10 PM

We do not address that subject in our policy manual either, it has been allowed in the office area in the past for

brief stays due to appointments and emergency situations, I think working with your employees is a benefit, things happen. As long as the child is not a distraction I don't disapprove of it. Children come first and I think if you work with your employees they are more loyal. If you are having disruptions it needs to be handled right away.

Posted by: karen | September 28, 2007 at 02:56 PM

What is wrong with most of you? We are at place of business for just that reason. To take care of business. Having your children on hand is distracting to you and to others. Children should not be allowed to be at work. If you don't have anyone to watch your children, then you should seriously consider setting up a network for such emergencies. My spouse and I never had relatives handy to help out and I would never impose on a friend. We adjusted for a few years. I worked nights and he worked days. That way they were home with a parent. After they entered the school environment, I was still lucky to have a job that was flexible enough to where I could work part time (my hours) so I could be available in case one fell ill, etc. We had an employee who brought her child to work several times because of "circumstances". I hated it. It was completely disruptive for me. We are being paid to do a job. Something suffers in this situation. You should definitely say something to you HR department if it bothers you.

Posted by: Strictly Professional in Delaware | September 28, 2007 at 03:54 PM

We are a financial institution. There have been a very few times where someone, due to babysitting issues, needed to either take off early at the last minute or be allowed to have the child dropped off here so the person could keep working. When we were short staffed and could not afford for the person to leave, we allowed the child to be left here. We have a kids area in the lobby with a kids table/chairs and some toys, and also a TV in the lobby, so there is enough in the lobby for the children to be self-entertained for the brief (usually 30 - 60 minutes) time in question.

Posted by: Mark | September 28, 2007 at 05:31 PM

I totally agree with Strictly Professional! At the place I used to work, certain people were allowed to bring their kids to work. Actually, I'm not sure if "allowed" is the appropriate word as they never asked, they just did it. Not only was it extremely disruptive but led to much resentment from the other employees as well as childless employees. While the kids were there, that person was only focused on their children and not their job. Everyone else had to pick up the slack. Why don't parents realize how unfair it is to childless employees that those with children take off much more time and are even given more time to take off just because they have children.

Posted by: B. | September 28, 2007 at 07:23 PM

It depends on the where you work. My company doesn't have anything in writing on this issue but the president of my company is very understanding and allows those with kids to bring their children to the office. He brings his children with him from time to time. Granted there are only five employees in HQ, four of the five have children with the youngest being 8 yrs old. We have a workstation set up for visitors/kids when they are in the office, a portable DVD player and plenty of whiteboards. I think the biggest issue of children in the office has more to do with how well behaved the children are and what rules and boundaries the parents set for the

children when they are in the office.

Posted by: Adrianna | October 01, 2007 at 08:05 AM

I work for a hospital and I am extremely lucky that my boss, the CEO, is a wonderfully understanding and kind man. Our facility has an on-site day-care for employees, and they bring the kids around on the "baby cart" a few times a day. Even those of us that don't have children on the cart enjoy the break and time to visit with the little ones. My son is 16 and he walks over after school, stops in my office to say hello and then goes to the cafeteria for a snack and finishes his homework while he waits for me to get off work so that we can drive home together. Nobody has ever complained

Posted by: Kristin | October 04, 2007 at 02:07 AM

I have to disagree with Strictly Professional and B. If you are a single mom (or dad) and do not have family close then there often are no choices or adjustments you can make. Many single parents, and yes even married parents, have to work full time in order to break even financially. Depending on skill sets nightwork is often not a viable option. Our company does not look favorably on children in the work place however they do realize that sometimes things happen. As long as it doesn't become a regular occurrence, it is for a short period of time, and the child is respectful of his or her surroundings then I don't see why it becomes anyone else's problem. If the child is disruptive then it needs to be brought to someone's attention and addressed. I have brought my child to work once (due to a broken water pipe at her daycare)in the 3 years since she was born, she was there about 45 minutes and most of the office never even knew. Again, things happen...Compassion and understanding are greatly appreciated when they do.

Posted by: M | October 05, 2007 at 05:16 PM