



## **ALICE<sup>®</sup> TOOLKIT** **EMPLOYERS**



**Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**

# ALICE IN THE WORKPLACE

**ALICE** is an acronym for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed, and it represents the growing number of families unable to afford the basics of housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, and technology. These workers often struggle to keep their households from financial ruin while they keep our local communities running.

Supporting employees to be financially stable is important to business leaders, yet the issues can seem too extensive or costly to address. Employers can do many things to help make ends meet; however, there are some systems and policies only business leadership can fine-tune. The following tips have been proven to help reduce turnover, absenteeism, and worker distractions.

**Investing in employee wellness creates a significant return on investment for employers.**

## IT STARTS WITH COMMUNICATION

*Leaders care about their teams, but research finds that most employees often do not perceive that care. Ongoing feedback is key to good morale.*

- **Orientation** – Onboarding is a great place to let employees know you care about them and to offer tools that support them.
- **Peer Support** – Employees' can provide support and encourage each other. Savings clubs, peer-mentoring programs, and team-building activities improve morale and outcomes.
- **Managers** – Supervisors often face many of the same challenges as their teams. Regularly checking in with managers can be more effective than employee resource guides, EAPs, or surveys alone.



## TOOLS

### Workforce Development

**Recruit and Develop Talent** – CareerSource Florida helps with recruiting, hiring, and training. It has funding for on-the-job training, workforce development, and retention incentives for new hires. CareerEdge works with local employers to reduce turnover by providing workers with the hard and soft skills they need to succeed.

**Tuition Assistance** – Millions of dollars in Pell Grants and other tuition assistance go unclaimed yearly. Employees and their children can access the Pell Grant for free funds to help them pursue technical certificates or academic degrees. Skill development and well-designed education reimbursement programs lead to more productive and loyal workers.

**401K** – Retirement programs are often underused because employees do not think they can find the dollars to save even with an employer match. Implement an opt-out policy to use part of a COLA/raise to increase contributions to savings. Opt-out policies lead to higher participation than traditional opt-in policies.

### Wages and Benefits

**Direct Deposit** – While more common, providing a financial product or options that fit an employee’s needs can save them money and hassle for HR. Expressing concern and offering support to find and use the correct account is affordable and impactful.

**Paid Time Off** – PTO is common for skilled work. However, entry-level jobs often lack this basic benefit. The consequence is often higher turnover, present but sick workers, and less stability among worker families.

**Child and Senior Care** – Caregiving often weighs heavily on employees’ minds and budgets, leading many to quit jobs they otherwise enjoy. A dependent care Flexible Spending Account (FSA) for childcare or senior care costs the employer little and reduces workers’ taxes. An employer can take the next step and qualify for 1:1 State funding up to \$50,000 through the Child Care Executive Partnership Program and qualify for federal tax credits by subsidizing childcare.

## Scheduling

**Stable Schedules** — Part-time employees often have to work multiple jobs to provide for their families. Providing stable hours, eliminating on-call shifts, and offering paths to full-time employment reduce turnover.

**Flexible Hours** — This benefits often leads to increased productivity and retention of skilled employees who would otherwise have to quit to address other needs in their lives.

**Work from Home** — More employees are seeking opportunities to work from home to save on transportation costs and maintain a work-life balance. Where possible, offer opportunities to work remotely.

## Transportation

**Bus Passes** — Often available at a discount when purchased through employers, these are often cost-effective yet may not meet every need. Free bus passes may be available to individuals below the Federal Poverty Level at [ctd.ftod.gov](http://ctd.ftod.gov)

**Carpooling** — Commuter Services can connect employees with vanpooling, emergency rides home, carpool matching services, and a “school pool” for parents with kids. Supporting the development of phone trees can help people realize that a colleague could offer a ride in case of an emergency.

**Credit** — Bad or no credit increases the cost of insurance and often makes car purchases unaffordable. Supporting credit building can help manage transportation costs.

## Health and Wellness

**KidCare** — All Florida children who are legal residents are eligible for health insurance coverage through KidCare. The premiums are determined on a sliding scale that is based on income. The highest premiums are often less expensive than those of many employer-provided family plans.

**Flexible/Health Spending Accounts** — Provide employees with a way to manage healthcare costs while saving 10 to 25% in taxes. Employers may contribute to the FSA as an added incentive. Pre-tax HSAs can be used for medical expenses during the year.

**Wellness Programs** — Smoking cessation, gym discounts, 5K event teams, standing desks and other initiatives help to create a healthier work environment and a healthier, more productive workforce. Health insurance companies, local hospitals/clinics or nonprofits offer these at low or no cost.

**Prescription Drugs** — Prescription discount cards like FamilyWize can help reduce out-of-pocket expenses. Check its online tool to determine the cost and discount options before going to the pharmacy.

**Mental Health** — An employee assistance program is an employee benefit program that assists employees with personal problems and/or work-related problems that may impact their job performance, health, mental and emotional well-being

# FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND CAPABILITY:

## **Payday Loans**

In tough times, some people turn to payday lenders but then struggle to pay it off. Non-profit credit counseling agencies can help employees 'freeze' the loan so they can pay it off without accruing more fees.

## **Financial Education**

Finances can be complicated, but there are many free in-person and online resources to help learn the basics, answer specific questions or prepare for big things like buying a home or retirement. Most banks and non-profits offer free or online options; some can be branded for your company.

## **Financial Coaching**

When information is not enough, a financial coach can help develop a plan to achieve individual goals and navigate barriers. Many local non-profits may offer this service, and phone-based support is available from groups like [DMCCCorp.org](http://DMCCCorp.org), [Credit.org](http://Credit.org), [CapitalGoodFund.org](http://CapitalGoodFund.org), and [ConsumerCredit.com](http://ConsumerCredit.com).

## **Emergency and Credit Building Loans**

Unexpected costs are part of life, and instead of payday advances or payday loans, you can offer safe alternatives to build employees' credit. Local credit unions and [CapitalGoodFund.org](http://CapitalGoodFund.org) offer loans for emergencies, immigration, and auto purchase and repair that build clients' credit so they can access less expensive market-based solutions in the future.

## **Bank Accounts**

Not having an account or one that does not fit your needs can cost up to \$40,000 over a lifetime. Credit unions and banks have various accounts to help employees avoid unnecessary fees even if they have had banking issues. Establishing a 'bank at work' relationship can often make it easier for employees to develop and maintain accounts and offer free benefits such as life insurance, mortgage/auto discounts, and more.

## **Incentivize Behavior**

Many companies wish they had more money to offer employees benefits, bonuses, and retirement contributions. Using the money you have to promote increased stability and asset creation can make the dollars have bigger impacts. A Matched Savings Program (MSP/IDA) is demonstrated model with many variations. If your business is unable to offer a full retirement match, an MSP could be a way to help employees build an emergency fund that keeps them more secure at home and work. Well-designed employee wellness programs can lower business costs.

## Technology

Technology can help in developing and communicating with your team. However, broadband internet is expensive. EveryoneOn.org offers many ways to access low-cost internet and computers to help children and adults learn, find jobs, and be more successful. If you earn less than \$35,000 or receive any public benefits, you likely qualify. To see your options and the PC, laptops, and tables available visit EveryoneOn.org and enter a zip code. An employee can also access device offers via text message by typing CONNECT to 21545 and entering their zip code.

## Insurance

**Life Insurance** – LifeBridge by MassMutual provides \$50,000 in free term life insurance for parents or guardians who make \$10,000 to \$40,000 and who range from 19 to age 42.

**Health Insurance Strategy** – At JM Family Enterprises, the cost of medical benefits is lower for low-wage earners and increases as associates earn more so that they can provide coverage for all associates.

**Voluntary Benefits** – These benefits are often provided in groups and at no cost to the employer, including accident, critical illness, hospital care, and legal.

## Dependents

**Savings Accounts** – Dependent Care Savings Accounts allow employees to put pre-tax money into an account to pay for child or dependent adult daycare.

**Care and Education** – Most communities have groups that coordinate and fund after-school tutoring, summer camps, and literacy programs. While demand is often high, acting early and continuing to seek opportunities is critical.

**Food and Nutrition** – Kids cafes, backpack feeding programs, and summer meals are just a few ways families can access food for their kids.

## Emergency Services

**Food Pantries** – Many families that do not qualify for regular food benefits but still struggle at times are welcome to use a variety of community food banks designed to help anyone keep their family fed.

**Financial Assistance** – Many working families do not know they may qualify for help with food, utility bills, etc. Some benefits like SNAP can provide monthly service with food, and others like LIHEAP can help up to twice a year with utility bills. These and other programs can help overcome an emergency or lean time.

**Call 211 for more information or resources.**



## GET CREATIVE:

### EXAMPLES FROM FLORIDA EMPLOYERS

**Associates Helping Associates** – At JM Family Enterprises, associates contribute to an emergency fund that associates in need can access.

**Employee Resource Center** – Rosen Hotels operates a Family Resource Center to assist employees with a variety of services, including financial assistance, childcare, and housing navigation.

**Creative Conversations** – Small businesses can benefit from increased morale among employees at no cost by talking with their staff about what can make their work experience more enjoyable.

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## TIPS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

*Even though small businesses often don't have the budget to implement high-cost HR solutions, they can use a "cafeteria" approach to no or low-cost policies that work for their company, including:*

- Flex Hours and Work from Home
- Connect with the CareerSource Florida network for free business services, including recruiting, hiring, and training assistance
- Ongoing training that allows employees to learn as much as possible

**"When employees thrive, businesses thrive. It's up to all of us to create organizational change that allows our employees to grow financially."**

**– Kathleen Cannon, President & CEO,  
United Way of Broward County**



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