

# **Work-Family insight of municipal government employees: A case study**

Secret, M.

*School of Social Work, Virginia Commonwealth University*

Swanberg, J.

*College of Social Work, University of Kentucky*

*Public Personnel Management*, 2008, Vol. 37, Issue 2 199-222

## **Abstract**

This qualitative case study brings the work-family concerns of the municipal work force to the fore by sharing the insights employees in one city government have about their paid work and family experiences and about strategies that could create work environments that are more supportive of their multiple roles. A review of the literature indicated that while much is known about employees' work-family relationships in the private sector, the city government workplace has been neglected in work-family scholarship. A work-family spillover model and an organizational analysis framework guided this exploratory study. Findings from 12 focus groups with a total of 96 participants suggest that municipal government employees face several challenges in managing their work and caregiving responsibilities and that they can best meet these challenges by having flexible schedules, supervisor support, and an organizational culture that is responsive to employees' needs. Additional work-family insights that emerged from the focus groups were that public sector employees have a high level of commitment to voluntary work in their community, that "family friendly" means a work environment that embodies the positive qualities of a nurturing family system, that there is a strong demand for elder care, that employees want to have the prerogative to individualize and identify their own list of family members for whom Family and Medical Leave Act time off can be used, and that a work-family advocate should be employed to help supervisory staff create and maintain a more family friendly workplace culture. Such findings form a foundation for future work-family research in local government settings and provide useful strategies other public sector workplaces could consider.

*Keywords: work & family, civil service, municipal government, private sector, public sector*