BALANCING EMPLOYMENT AND ELDER CARE

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Balancing employment and elder care:

- The context
- How is “balance” achieved?
- What we know about patterns of employment among caregivers
- Policy dimensions
- Unanswered questions and barriers to obtaining those answers

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Mainly, unpaid or “informal” caregivers, most of whom are family members.

Estimates of proportion of family caregivers that are employed range from less than one-third to over one-half.

Among “primary caregivers,” many (about 44%) are themselves over 65.

Most (67%) are women
The context (2): heterogeneity in the type and quantity, and organization of care provided:

- Broad range of tasks—emotional support, arranging services, transportation, household chores (IADLs), personal care (feeding, bathing, dressing, etc.; ADLs), supervision or monitoring.
- Some are daily, others less frequent; task demands may change unexpectedly and be highly variable.
- Can be shared with others (e.g. siblings).
- Some can be done at a distance, and all are to some extent done by family members living at a distance.
How is “balance” achieved?

- Reduce hours of work; cut back to part-time.
- Use vacation/sick time; take (unpaid) leave.
- Quit or retire sooner than planned.
- Cut back on other types of time use.
Most of the evidence comes from point-in-time comparisons:

- Differences in hours of work
- High-wage individuals provide less care to parents
- Absenteeism and costs to employers
What we know about patterns of employment among caregivers

- Evidence on work and caregiving transitions, and long-run consequences:
  - Employed individuals appear to be no less likely to become caregivers, but are more likely to subsequently leave employment
  - Long-run economic consequences
Some policy dimensions:

- FMLA and unpaid leave to care for family members
- Care credits – taxes or retirement savings
- Cash payments to family caregivers
- AoA’s National Family Caregiver Support Program
Unanswered questions and barriers to obtaining those answers

- Little known about cause-and-effect relationships
- Little known about effectiveness of policy interventions
- Problems with available measures of “caregiving” and “care hours”
- Much of what we “know” based on dated sources of information
- Baseline (2011) data from NHATS/NSOC expected to be released May 2012.