

## **The Sandwich Squeeze**

The sandwich generation didn't count on having to take care of their aging parents or children who come back home after graduation—and that's why they're caught in the middle. And, with those challenges, their companies are feeling the crunch as well. Dr. Shirley Davis, director of diversity and inclusion at the Society for Human Resource Management, says there are more than 70 million workers from this generation and they need to know they have the kind of coverage which can hit these impending needs. "Companies are starting to have adult care options similar to child care benefits," she says. "It's helping workers get much-needed reimbursement to apply to parents who need assisted living help." One AARP study, quoted from an MSN.com article, says a private room at a nursing home costs an average of \$75,000 a year and assisted living still comes in at more than \$35,000 a year. Boomerang Children, young adults who come back home to live after adulthood, also present the financial crunch of putting off selling the family home, a strong means of savings in pre-retirement. In fact, the United States Census Bureau says that roughly 80 million households contain an adult child living with their parents. "The kind of extra financial pressure this put on a family can be immense," says Davis.

Along with understanding these problems, flexible work arrangements can make the difference, especially when it comes to taking care of an aging parent. "Telecommuting has to be a greater consideration because losing the commute may help workers find the time they need for these extra problems," Davis says. She adds that companies will also have to be more sensitive to time off altogether to care for parents through sick and available leave policy—but when it's problematic and affects job performance it needs to be addressed. That same MSN.com article backs this up with estimates that American businesses loses anywhere from \$11 billion to \$33 billion a year from the sandwich generation's challenges. "You can't make assumptions about your employee's situations," Davis says. "Talk about expectations of the job and how you can work with their family challenges. Deal with the problem as a team."