FAMILY FORWARD NC

Business Smart.
Family Friendly.
Future Ready.

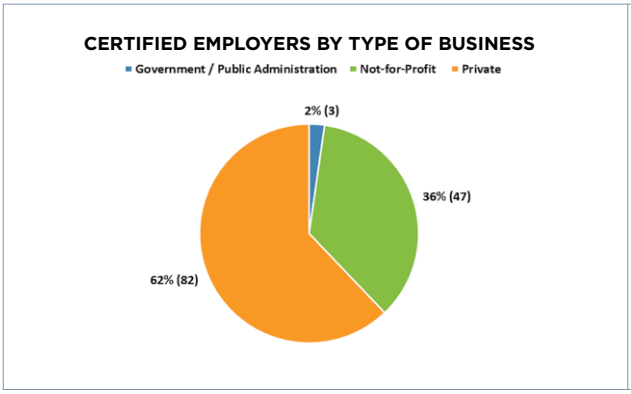
Work that Works for Families

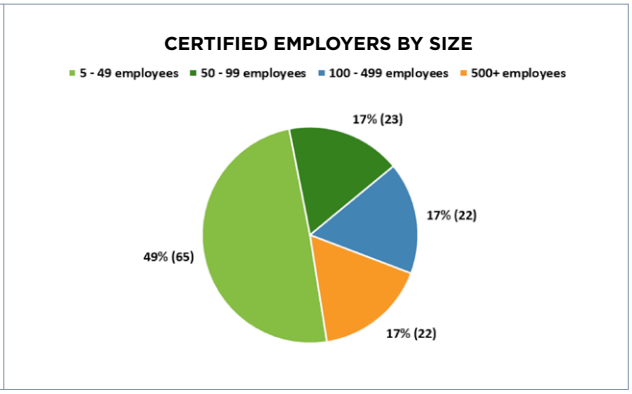
Benchmarking Family Forward NC® Certified Employers

Our benchmarking report is an analysis of the policies and practices of Family Forward NC® Certified Employers and their employees' perspectives, collected from October 22, 2022 through June 9, 2025.

It is the first benchmarking report that compares policies across all of our Certified Employers, recognizes best practices, and identifies opportunities for growth.

Employers are evaluated based on family-friendly policies offered at their workplace. The benchmarking includes **132 Family Forward NC® Certified Employers**, representing 40 counties, 296 business locations, and 59,928 employees across NC.





Our analysis highlights how Family Forward NC® Certified Employers are at the forefront of recognizing the need to support their workforce and children's health and well-being and are taking action by offering family-supporting policies and benefits. At the same time, **employee survey data reveals the differences between what policies and benefits employers provide and what working families actually want and need**. The employer-employee disconnect shows up prominently in the analysis for wages, paid parental leave, child care, and health and wellness. The report further details these disconnects, including employees reporting they are unaware of or confused about benefits that *are* available to them.

Here are some highlights from the aggregated data of Certified Employer applications and almost 8,000 employee survey responses.

CERTIFIED EMPLOYERS	EMPLOYEES
Paid Leave	
74% offer some form of paid parental leave: maternity, paternity, adoption, or foster/guardianship. **Only 22%** of Certified Employers offer 12 weeks of paid leave, the length recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and others.	Employees report needing **longer leave time** (paid parental or other leave) and paid parental leave for more than just the birth-parent.
Wages	
The majority of Certified Employers offer a living wage or higher, exceeding the statewide rate of 58% of working adults age 25-44 in NC who earn a living wage. Still, 11% of employees working for Certified Employers reported earning **below the living wage.**	Employees report wages are of top concern. Financial stability and security is critical for everyone. For working parents, a living wage can help improve lifelong health, education, and economic outcomes for their children.

CERTIFIED EMPLOYERS	EMPLOYEES
Flexible Work and Scheduling	
Certified Employers prioritize flexibility for their employees as a key retention and recruitment strategy by providing **flex-time, predictable schedules**, and **remote work** options.	The majority of employees report they are **"satisfied"** or **"extremely satisfied"** with scheduling policies at their workplace.
Child Care Supports	
Most Certified Employers offer minimal support for child care. Only **23%** offer some form of financial assistance or on-site child care. And **29%** don't offer *any* child care benefits at all, including nearly half of the largest businesses, which typically have greater resources and the ability to support a larger workforce.	Employees report needing **more child care supports and lack of clarity** on what their employer may already offer. What is abundantly clear is that the complicated nature of our child care system leads to confusion on what to offer, how to offer, and how to communicate to employees what is available.
Health and Wellness	
Many employers are required to offer health insurance by law, but Certified Employers go beyond: **82%** cover a significant share of employee medical premiums. The majority offer **Employee Assistance Programs** that provide mental health resources.	Employees report wanting **better insurance coverage options** and additional coverages like dental, vision, and disability, as well as **financial assistance for dependent coverage.**

Employers can fill gaps between benefits offered and what employees want and need. The range of complexity and cost to offer or enhance these benefits vary. And while the outcomes can also vary, what's clear is that investing in family-friendly workplace policies is no longer optional, so focusing on your competitive advantage is vital.

Our Recommendations:

- Establish parity for paid parental leave between mothers and fathers and increase weeks of paid parental leave
- Provide support for child care through a financial contribution to lower a parent's burden
- Provide more financial coverage of dependent health care premiums
- Regularly engage employees about policies and benefits
- Ensure compliance with new federal laws on accommodations for pregnant and breastfeeding employees
- Become advocates for policies that support working families, such as increased access to child care, paid sick leave, and paid family medical leave insurance

SCAN THE QR CODE TO ACCESS THE FULL REPORT.

Visit **FamilyForwardNC.com** to learn more about how your business can be a family-friendly workplace or to become a **Family Forward NC® Certified Employer.**

NC Early Childhood FOUNDATION

The North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation leads Family Forward NC®, our innovative initiative that supports employer-led change to increase access to research-based, family-friendly practices—big and small—that improve workplace productivity, recruitment, and retention; grow a strong economy; and support children's healthy development. Family Forward NC®'s mission is to engage, support, and promote employers of all sizes and in all sectors in adopting family-friendly policies that improve child and family health and well-being and provide direct business benefits to employers.