

Workplace intervention improves sleep of employees' children

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A workplace intervention designed to reduce employees' work-family conflict and increase schedule flexibility also has a positive influence on the sleep patterns of the employees' children.

The intervention, Support-Transform-Achieve-Results (STAR), includes training supervisors to be more supportive of their employees' personal and family lives, changing the structure of work so that employees have more control over their work time, and changing the culture in the workplace so that colleagues are more supportive of each other's efforts to integrate their work and personal lives.

The research team conducted several other tests of the effects of the intervention. In an [earlier study](#), for example, they showed that STAR resulted in employed parents spending more time with their [children](#) without reducing their [work time](#).

In this study, the researchers found that children whose parents participated in the STAR intervention showed an improved quality of sleep one year later compared to the children of employees who were randomly assigned to a control group. The researchers published their findings in the June issue out today (May 20) of the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

"These findings show the powerful effect that parents' workplace experiences can have on their children," said Susan McHale, distinguished professor of human development and family studies, Penn

State. "The STAR intervention focused solely on workplace experiences, not on parenting practices. We can speculate that the STAR intervention helped parents to be more physically and emotionally available when their children needed them to be."

The youth in the study were ages 9 through 17, which is a crucial age group for developing [healthy sleep habits](#), as youth become more independent and more involved in friends, school and social activities, McHale said.

McHale and her team measured [sleep patterns](#) by interviewing [employees'](#) children on the phone every evening for eight consecutive evenings both before and after the STAR intervention. Each night they asked the children about their sleep on the prior night, including what time they went to bed, what time they woke up that morning, how well they slept and how hard it was to fall asleep.

An important part of this method was collecting the data on consecutive nights.

"Precision of reports is enhanced by getting the data on a daily basis," McHale said.

This research is part of the Work, Family and Health Network's evaluation of the effects of the STAR intervention.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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