

DECEMBER 2025 ISSUE

# The EO Beat

THE OFFICIAL PERIODICAL OF  
THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION



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平等機會委員會  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION

# The EO Beat

## Creating Family-friendly Work Environments



In Hong Kong, many vulnerable members of the community rely on their families for essential daily care. According to official figures, around 226 000 elderly long-term care recipients had an immediate family member (e.g. spouse, son/daughter or son-in-law/daughter-in-law) as their primary carer in 2021. <sup>[1]</sup> Around 450 000 persons with disabilities and persons with chronic diseases also depend on another person in their everyday life <sup>[2]</sup>, while working parents are now commonplace in many households.

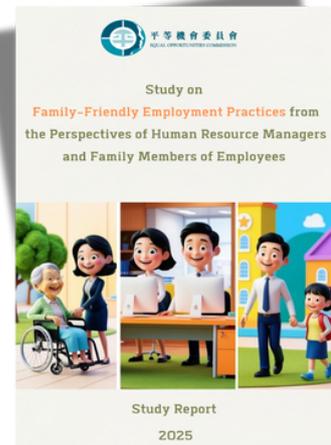
In addition to supporting their family members, many carers also have to manage paid employment and other work responsibilities. This “double burden” often puts employees with caring responsibilities under significant pressure, affecting their physical and mental wellbeing.

Supporting carers requires contributions from diverse stakeholders. Nevertheless, implementing family-friendly employment practices (FFEPs) in the workplace, such as flexible work arrangements, flexible leave arrangements, and various types of family leave, can significantly alleviate the pressure caregivers face.

[1] [The Hong Kong 2021 Population Census – Thematic Report: Older Persons](#)

[2] [The Special Topics Report No. 63 – Persons with Disabilities and Chronic Diseases](#)

In August 2025, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) published the findings from the *Study on Family-Friendly Employment Practices from the Perspectives of Human Resource Managers and Family Members of Employees*. Through surveys and focus group interviews with family members of employed persons and human resources (HR) professionals, the study examined the common FFEPs adopted by employers in Hong Kong, their effectiveness in supporting employees, and the challenges in their implementation.



### Views of Family Members of Employed Persons

The survey of family members of employed persons found that respondents spend, on average, 26.5 hours per week on uncompensated caregiving responsibilities. 16% of respondents reported spending over 40 hours per week on caregiving, equivalent to working a full-time job. These individuals should be seen as “at-risk carers,” as they have also indicated in the survey that they are unable to handle family responsibilities on their own, despite already dedicating many hours to caregiving.



Respondents spend on average  
**26.5 hours per week**  
on caregiving responsibilities

For two-person households, stay-at-home carers, and self-employed persons, the biggest challenge they perceive in meeting family responsibilities is the lack of manpower, whereas people in full- or part-time employment reported the lack of financial resources as the biggest challenge in providing care for family members. The survey also noted that hired helpers or volunteers cannot replace the roles played by working family members in providing care.

Regarding their views on FFEPs, family members of employed persons considered flexible working hours, a five-day work week and remote work arrangements as practices that can facilitate employed persons in fulfilling their family responsibilities. By contrast, working, answering calls or being on standby outside office hours are perceived to have a negative impact on employed persons’ ability to fulfil their family responsibilities.

#### FFEPs that can facilitate employed persons in fulfilling family responsibilities

- Flexible working hours
- Five-day work week
- Remote work arrangements

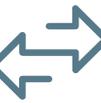


The unique role that employed persons play in family caregiving is further highlighted in focus group interviews. Some interviewees emphasised the importance of spending time with their children and attending school events to develop a close relationship with them. In the case of elderly care, such responsibility may still rest on family members even when the household has hired a domestic worker. In addition, interviewees noted that providing medical insurance coverage for family members, even if limited, is an effective way for employers to demonstrate their commitment to creating a family-friendly workplace.

### Views of HR Professionals

In the survey of HR professionals, the study found that flexible working hours, a five-day work week, and quarter-day or hourly annual leave are among the FFEPs more commonly adopted by employers in Hong Kong, while paid compassionate leave and paid marriage leave are the more common types of family leave provided by local employers.

#### FFEPs Implemented by Employers in Hong Kong

	FFEPs	Provision Rate
	Flexible work hours	65.8%
	Five-day work week	47.3%
	Paid compassionate leave	38.5%
	Paid marriage leave	24%
	Quarter-day/Hourly annual leave	24%
	Flexibility to change between full-time and part-time employment	18.3%
	Medical coverage for family members	15.8%
	Remote work	13.3%



The survey found that employers' awareness of FFEPs remains low. Close to 90% of the HR professionals surveyed reported that their companies or organisations do not have written guidelines or rules on FFEPs. Notably, 24% to 45% of the respondents were unsure whether the current employment measures implemented by employers were effective in assisting employees in taking care of family members with various needs, particularly those with mental health needs (45%), children with special educational needs (36%), and single-parent children (30.3%). Furthermore, 4% of respondents reported that their employer might ask employees to resign if they requested additional leave to handle family affairs after exhausting their paid annual leave, which could lead to discriminatory treatment of employees with family status. These findings reflect a need for employers to review employment arrangements to enhance family-friendliness in the workplace.



In the focus group interviews, HR professionals generally agreed that FFEPs are essential for attracting talent, as some candidates directly asked about an employer's FFEPs during interviews. They also emphasised that the Government plays a key role in introducing FFEPs, as businesses in the private sector tend to follow its lead in implementing such policies.

### **Promoting a Family-friendly Workplace Culture**



Creating a family-friendly work environment would ensure carers receive adequate support at home. At the same time, FFEPs can help employers attract talent while also enhancing current employees' sense of belonging. Based on the study's findings, the EOC put forward several recommendations to promote a family-friendly workplace culture in Hong Kong. Examples include:



**Promote a culture of disconnecting from work after office hours** – Allowing employees to disconnect will enable them to share family responsibilities and support other family members who also have caregiving responsibilities.



**Set out written FFEP policies** – By providing written FFEP policies, employers can ensure employees have access to relevant support when they need to attend to family matters. Written policies would also safeguard against possible unlawful actions.



**Flexible work arrangements during bad weather** – Where appropriate, and where the job roles allow, employers should consider allowing employees to work remotely during and after adverse weather conditions.



**Government to lead by example** – The Government should lead by example and introduce more types of family leaves through incremental administrative measures and legislative refinements.



**Introduce medical coverage for family members** – All interviewees view medical coverage for family members as an important FFEP. Employers could consider allowing employees to include a set number of additional family members under the company's medical insurance policy.

Visit the EOC website to view the [full report](#) of the Study.

# Supporting Employees with Mental Health Conditions at Work



There has been growing awareness of the importance of mental health in recent years. Yet poor mental health remains prevalent in the community. One survey of the Hong Kong public's depression rate estimated that over 11% of the respondents require professional therapy or counselling.<sup>[3]</sup> People with mental health conditions also continue to face stigmatisation and discrimination in daily life. According to a study published by the EOC in 2023, over 80% of employed persons considered discrimination against people with mental health conditions to be very prevalent or quite prevalent in Hong Kong, while one-fifth of those surveyed held negative views towards people with mental health conditions.<sup>[4]</sup>

Enhancing mental health support in the workplace is just as important as providing a safe and healthy work environment for employees. In addition to empowering employees to manage work-related stress and challenges better, creating a mental health-friendly workplace can also improve productivity and strengthen retention, benefiting employers.

## Proactive Mental Health Support

In July 2025, the EOC published a new guide titled *How to Support Employees with Mental Health Conditions at Work* to help employers and managers promote mental health support in the workplace. It highlights indicators that may suggest potential mental health concerns, enabling employers and managers to take a proactive approach to supporting employees. By highlighting the lived experiences of people with mental health conditions, the guide also explains common challenges they face at work, such as being unwilling to express their needs for fear of being judged and being treated unfavourably.



[3] [Hong Kong Depression Index Survey 2023](#)

[4] [Study on Perceptions of Stigmatization and Discrimination of Persons with Mental Illness in the Workplace](#)

## Common Symptoms of Poor Mental Health



### Emotional Signs:

- Excessive worry or nervousness
- Feeling easily overwhelmed or upset
- Loss of interest or motivation in usual activities
- Suicidal thoughts



### Physical Signs:

- Getting sick more often
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Persistent tiredness or signs of stress
- Skipping meals or binge eating
- Unexplained aches and pains

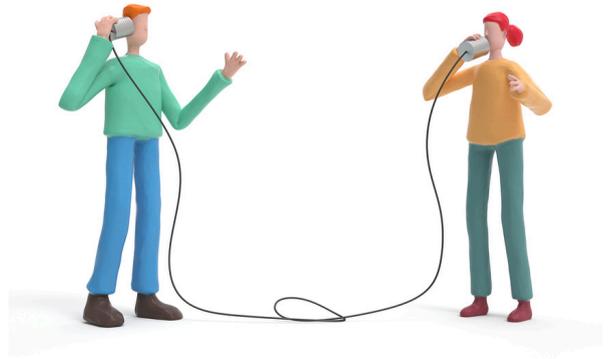


### Behavioural Signs:

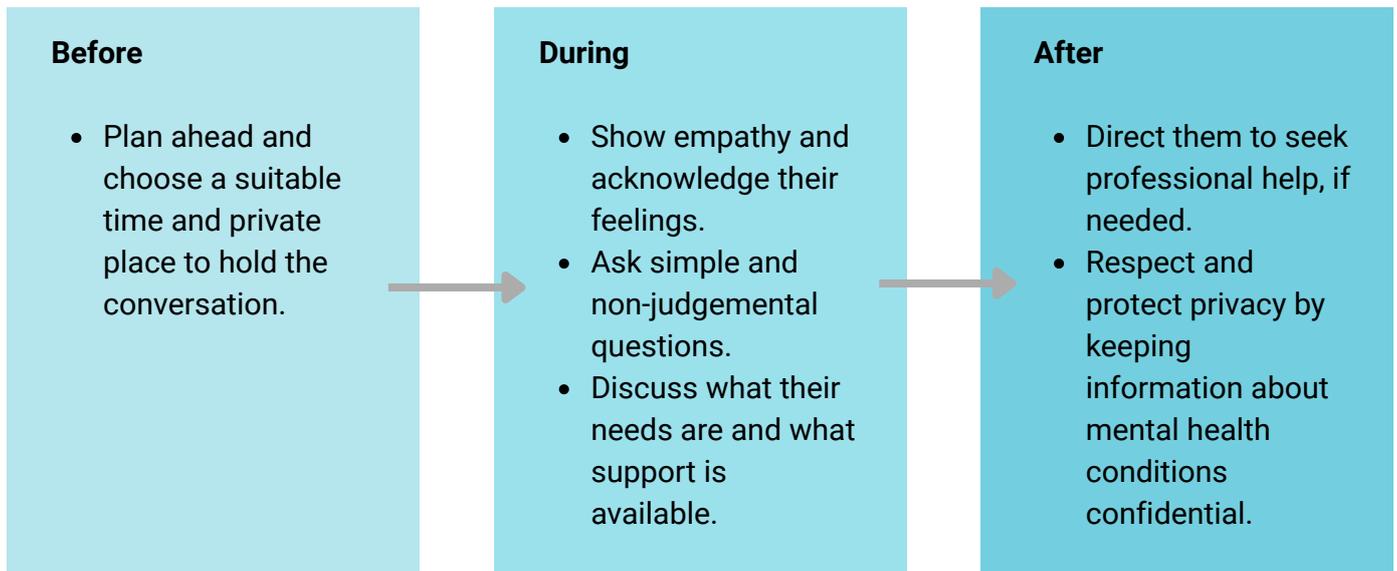
- Frequently late for work
- Increased absenteeism
- Struggling with basic tasks
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or multitasking
- Avoiding certain workplace activities

## Strategies for Communication and Accommodation

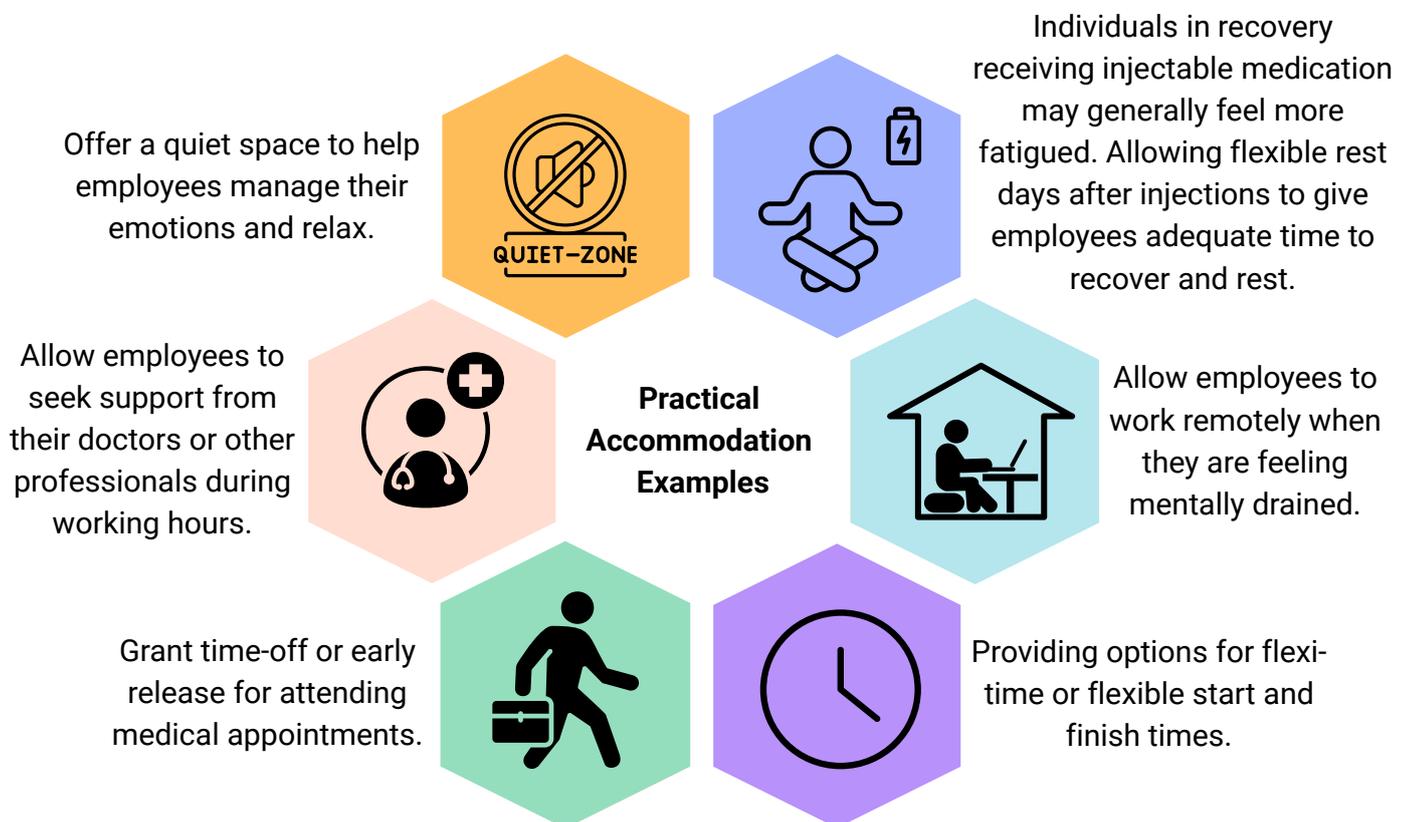
Two-way communication is key for employers and managers to maintain a strong working relationship with employees who have mental health conditions, allowing both sides to discuss suitable work arrangements that meet employees' needs while ensuring they can perform their duties. The Guide offers practical strategies for employers and managers to follow in communicating with employees with mental health conditions.



## How to Communicate with Employees with Mental Health Conditions



It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to providing reasonable accommodation in the workplace for employees with mental health conditions. What is suitable for one employee with a particular condition may not be appropriate for another employee with a similar condition. Below are some practical accommodation examples employers and managers could consider providing to employees with mental health conditions:



The guide is now available for download on the [EOC website](#).



Operational barriers are policies, procedures or practices that do not meet the needs of people with disabilities and may directly or indirectly restrict or obstruct their use of goods, services, facilities and premises.

One example of operational barriers involved an event organiser requiring all customers to visit a designated venue in person to receive cash refunds. The arrangement made it difficult for customers with certain disabilities to complete the refund process. Other examples include the lack of guidelines for staff on ways to assist people with diverse needs, resulting in inconsistent or inadequate services.



Attitudinal barriers refer to behaviours that are consciously or subconsciously caused by prejudice, ignorance, misunderstanding or stereotypes towards people with disabilities, leading to unfriendly attitudes and disability discrimination in service provision.

In one example, a waiter at a restaurant rudely refused catering service to a wheelchair user, falsely claiming that no seats were available, even though there were vacant seats and ample space for the customer to dine comfortably. In another case, a professional spoke in an arrogant tone and made harassing remarks about a client's disability during a consultation session, frightening the client and causing distress.



The Guide provides eight recommendations to break down operational and attitudinal barriers:

**1** Conduct a policy review to remove discriminatory practices and amend inflexible policies

**2** Provide an accessible environment unless doing so would cause unjustifiable hardship



**3** Inspect and maintain facilities regularly and ensure compliance with accessibility standards

**4** Adopt digital accessibility



**5** Provide training to staff members to enhance their sensitivity and awareness of the anti-discrimination ordinances

**6** Equip frontline staff to provide better communication

**7** Appropriate attendance to feedback and complaints

**8** Make use of assistive technologies



The guide is now available for download on the [EOC website](#).

## Universal Design Award Scheme 2026/27

To further encourage the community to provide accessible environments for all and recognise organisations that promote the concept of universal design, the EOC has launched the second Universal Design Award Scheme in October 2025. In addition to the five initial categories, namely shopping malls and retail spaces, office buildings and office spaces, restaurants, buildings and sites with recreational, sports, or cultural purposes, and revitalised sites, the EOC has added two new categories: public and private residential buildings and higher education institutions. The expansion enables UDAS to cover more environments related to everyday activities, from living, working and studying to leisure pursuits.

In addition to adding new categories, two new accolades – the Double Gold Award and the Continuous Improvement Award – have been introduced, along with the Special Recognition, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Awards. The introduction of these two new awards encourages past awardees to enhance accessibility on their premises and services further. The scoring criteria have also been updated, with smaller premises assessed under different scoring standards. Applicants who offer awareness and sensitivity training to staff members, or have been recognised by other award schemes for promoting changes in organisational culture, will receive bonus points.

UDAS is now open for applications until 31 March 2026. Visit the [UDAS page](#) on the EOC website for more information.



The poster features a central isometric illustration of a city scene with various accessible environments: a shopping mall, office buildings, a sports field, a residential building, a university, and a public space. People are shown using different types of mobility aids like wheelchairs, canes, and a dog. Logos for the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the UDAS are in the top corners. A QR code for more details is in the bottom right. The text at the bottom includes the award name, application deadline, and contact information.

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2026/27  
通用設計嘉許計劃  
Universal Design Award Scheme

For Details:  
QR Code

2026/27  
**Universal Design Award Scheme**

Application closes on 31 March 2026

☎ (852) 2511 8211 ✉ UDAS@eoc.org.hk 🌐 <https://www.eoc.org.hk/en/udas>

# EOC Snapshots

## EOC Recognises Racially Inclusive Schools and Employers



The [Racially Friendly Campus Recognition Scheme](#) encourages schools to educate their students on racial inclusion through diverse activities. On 4 July 2025, the EOC held a ceremony to recognise the schools that participated in the 2024/25 edition of the Scheme. Over 100 principals and teachers attended the event, which was officiated by Dr CHOI Yuk-lin, Secretary for Education of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The Scheme has attracted the participation of 133 kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. All participating schools met the Scheme's criteria and were recognised as Racially Friendly Campus Champions. In addition, twenty-seven schools received the Racially Friendly Campus Star Champions for participating in the Scheme for three consecutive years, while 53 activities organised by 46 schools received the newly introduced Racially Friendly Campus Activity Award of the Year. Not only were these activities innovative, but they were also suitable for long-term implementation by other schools.



Separately, the EOC launched the inaugural Racial Diversity & Inclusion Employers Award Scheme earlier this year. The scheme recognises organisations that demonstrate a strong commitment to implementing policies and practices that foster racially inclusive work environments.



On 21 November 2025, the EOC held a ceremony to recognise 96 organisations in the scheme. Mr Chris SUN Yuk-han, Secretary for Labour and Welfare of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, officiated the ceremony as the Guest of Honour.

The Scheme consists of three award categories – Racial Equity in Hiring Award, Inclusive Workplace Award, and Community Engagement Award – and attracted 84 applications from 96 organisations. Following a detailed assessment by a judging panel and advisors consisting of EOC Members and experts from human resources associations, 24 applications received a Gold Award in at least one category, 30 received a Silver Award in at least one category, 26 received a Bronze Award in at least one category, and 4 earned the Racially Friendly Award. Notably, 10 organisations received Gold Awards in all three categories. Click [here](#) for a complete list of awardees.



## EOC Presents Awards to the Winners of “Safe Spaces for All”: Anti-Sexual Harassment 60-Second Video Contest 2025



On 17 July 2025, the EOC held a ceremony to present awards to the winners of the “Safe Spaces for All”: Anti-Sexual Harassment 60-Second Video Contest 2025. Mr Clement WOO Kin-man, Under Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, was the ceremony’s Guest of Honour.

In light of the growing popularity of short videos on social media, the EOC’s Anti-Sexual Harassment Unit launched a video contest, inviting the public to produce creative videos that promote a culture of mutual respect and foster safe communities.

The contest featured three categories – Secondary Education, Higher Education, and Open. The judging panel selected a Champion, a First Runner-Up, and a Second Runner-Up in each category. The EOC’s Anti-Sexual Harassment Resource Platform Instagram account, “[COMPASS\\_EOC](#)”, showcased the shortlisted entries and invited the public to vote for their favourite videos. The videos that received the most qualified “Likes” were awarded the “Most Popular Entry on Instagram” title. The ASHU also organised “The Most Meaningful Comments on IG Prize Game” to engage the public in sharing reviews of the shortlisted videos and their thoughts on sexual harassment. The winning videos carried different messages regarding the elimination of sexual harassment, such as how victims may experience severe emotional distress from unwelcome sexually explicit jokes, what bystanders can do to intervene effectively and debunking common myths about sexual harassment.

The [list of winners](#) is available on the EOC Anti-Sexual Harassment Resource Platform, COMPASS.

## EOC showcases *Harmony in the Universe* at the Learning & Teaching Expo 2025



From 2 to 4 July 2025, the EOC participated in the Learning & Teaching Expo 2025 to showcase the online educational modules, *Harmony in the Universe*. The modules aim to enhance primary school students' understanding of equal opportunities. Visitors to the EOC booth received exclusive souvenirs related to the educational modules, as well as other educational materials produced by the EOC for visitors from different backgrounds.

Launched in December 2024, the educational modules feature animated short videos that follow two astronauts and their friends as they explore themes of diversity and inclusion in their journey through space. The EOC further released two new episodes and accompanying teaching materials earlier this year. Primary school teachers, educators, and parents can visit the [Harmony in the Universe webpage](#) to watch all four episodes and download the accompanying teaching materials.

