



Experience Wave Iowa: Flexible Scheduling for Mature Iowans

Did You Know?

435,220

The estimated number of people age 65 and over who were living in Iowa on July 1, 2005. This age group accounted for 14.7 percent of the total population.

15.6

The percent of people age 65 and over in Iowa who were in the workforce in 2005.

663,186

The projected population age 65 and older in Iowa in the year 2030. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this age group will constitute 22.4 percent of the state's total population at that time.

84

The number of Iowa counties (out of 99) in 2030 in which at least 20 percent of the residents will be ages 65 and over according to Woods & Pool Economics, Inc. In 2000 that number was 30.

Experience Wave Iowa is an initiative that works to raise awareness about the opportunities that mature Iowans provide to the workforce and community. Currently, traditional thinking and societal barriers are slowing progress in changing the opinions and understanding of what our state stands to gain from mature Iowans that are engaged in work, the community, and education. Iowa is expected to experience a workforce shortage in the next few years, and mature Iowans are ready and willing to fill that gap. Experience Wave Iowa believes that mature Iowans need meaningful volunteer opportunities, workplace flexibility, and opportunities for lifelong learning to thrive and contribute to their full potential.

Iowa's Senior Population

According to the State Data Center of Iowa and the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs, it is estimated that 435,220 people age 65 and over live in Iowa as of July 1, 2005. That is 14.7 percent of the state's total population. By the year 2030, the percentage of individuals ages 65 and older in Iowa will represent 22.4 percent of the population. In 2005, just 30 Iowa counties had at least 20 percent of residents age 65 and older. By 2030, it is projected that 84 Iowa counties will consist of at least 20 percent of residents age 65 and older.

Mature Iowans are educated: 79 percent of individuals age 65 and older have at least a high school diploma. This population is civically engaged. Eighty-three percent of Iowans age 65 and older were registered to vote in the 2004 presidential election. This population works. More than 68,000 Iowans age 65 and older were in the labor force in 2005, and just 3.2 percent of Iowans ages 65 and older were unemployed.

Help Welcome Mature Workers into the Workplace: Flexible Scheduling

By 2010, as the baby boomers begin to reach traditional retirement age, the U.S. workforce will face a shortfall of more than four million workers. Iowa alone will have 150,000 more jobs than workers by 2012. Without measures to help fill this gap, there will not be enough new workers to replace those who are retiring. As many as seven in ten baby boomers say they plan to work past retirement age or never retire, thus easing the worker gap for those businesses who are able to benefit from employing these mature workers. These experienced workers also have the capacity to serve as trainers, mentors, and advisors for Iowa businesses. Additionally, newly retired workers may be facing a gap in health care coverage or financial needs that require them to keep working.

Even though many workers are not planning to retire completely, they do not necessarily want to continue working as they have been. Flexible scheduling can help position mature workers in the workplace, benefiting both the worker, who keeps working, and the employer, who gains from the experience of the worker. Options for flexibility in the workplace vary by business and employee and may include seasonal, contract, or part-time work. Other popular forms of flexible scheduling include flextime, telecommuting, and phased retirement. Flextime allows workers to set their own start and end times as long



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as they meet the conditions of working hours set by their employer. Telecommuting allows the worker to work at home and “commute” to work via phone or other electronic forms of communication. Telecommuting permits workers to work when it is most convenient to them and avoids time lost during a commute, or it can allow mature workers to work in a specialized position away from where they live. Finally, phased retirement allows mature workers to ease their way into retirement by reducing their schedule before fully retiring. Some workers may also desire to pursue other aspects of the lives and desire to work intermittently.

Flexible scheduling can be used to keep mature workers comfortably in the workplace. Mature workers can be assets to businesses by bringing greater engagement to their jobs, often resulting in higher productivity. Mature workers also provide an advantage in customer service settings that are utilized by other mature adults that appreciate working with peers. Perhaps the greatest asset however, is the years’ worth of experience and knowledge that can help a business succeed and train the next generation of workers.

What is Still Needed?

Despite the advantages, barriers exist discouraging mature workers from staying at work. The reduced hours of phased retirement is often accompanied by pension payments to maintain income. However, many pension plans do not allow for double payment, forcing mature workers to choose between the two sources of income. Also, Social Security has income caps forcing mature workers to choose between some form of work and receiving benefits. Finally, many workplaces simply lack flexible scheduling options of any kind making workplaces less welcoming to mature workers who wish to or need to continue working, yet also have other priorities to balance as they age. Changes in pension plan policies, options for health care coverage, Social Security policies, and a greater availability of flexible scheduling would help benefit workers who wish to keep working and allow employers to continue to benefit from their services.

Keeping Seniors Engaged

As baby boomers move into retirement age, it is clear that these individuals will play vital roles in strengthening America’s communities. Throughout the country, mature Americans will reshape the thinking about mature citizens by making themselves an irrefutable asset. Many seniors are seeking opportunities to stay engaged in their communities. Research has proven that adults who are active and engaged are healthier longer and less reliant on federal programs. It is important to continue giving mature Iowans the chance to stay involved in their communities, which is why Experience Wave promotes flexible workplaces, volunteer positions, and educational opportunities aimed at mature Americans.