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## MoFo Launches Support Network For Parents, Caregivers

By **Kevin Penton**

*Law360 (January 25, 2024, 9:49 AM EST)* -- When Robert May joined Morrison Foerster LLP in 2014, the attorney recalls not knowing any co-workers in his work area who had school-age children. Nearly 10 years later, he says his co-workers on his San Francisco office floor alone are raising more than 20 young kids.

With a new generation of attorneys navigating the balance between being successful at the workplace and tending to the needs of their families, Morrison Foerster in November launched its Parents + Caregivers Network, which aims to provide support and resources for those taking on the proverbial juggling act.

"It seemed like something was really changing and could use some attention," May, a parent and litigator who serves as the network's co-chair, said.

Morrison Foerster currently offers parents of newborns up to 22 weeks of paid leave, along with a reduced schedule for the period when they are transitioning back to the workplace and reduced time arrangements for anyone who requests them, May said.

The new network is geared to provide a support mechanism for parents once they are back in the workplace and are trying to find the best way to balance their workplace and family needs, Kate Driscoll, a Washington, D.C.-based partner who works as part of Morrison Foerster's white collar defense practice group, said.

More than 200 Morrison Foerster employees attended a recent workshop that featured guidelines for how to deal with the "mental load" of working and parenting and offered personalized strategies for how to deal with the related stress, Driscoll, the network's co-chair, said.

"It can feel like there's this omnipresent ball juggling act," Driscoll, who is also a parent, said. "What we try to do is not only provide support for attorneys and business professionals here at Morrison & Foerster, but also give them the tools for how to drop the balls that may not be as pressing or as important as others."

Through the new network, Morrison Foerster is looking to support its attorneys and employees who identify as parents and caregivers and encourage their recruitment, engagement, development, retention and advancement, according to the firm.

"Not only does it show the firm is dedicated to their development in and outside of work, but it allows for colleagues to show up for each other in that way as well and connect over shared experiences," Natalie Kernisant, Morrison Foerster's chief diversity and inclusion officer, said.

Looking ahead, May envisions the network continuing to offer attorneys and business professionals additional formal, scheduled programming similar to the mental load training that it organized in November, he said. It is expected to expand to Europe and Asia by the middle of 2024, May said.

May also imagines the network as serving as an umbrella for various local parent and caregiver groups currently organized in several of Morrison Foerster's offices, assisting members in pooling resources and ideas. For example, his local group in San Francisco is interested in creating a database of trusted child caregivers that attorneys and business professionals have had good experiences with, as a way to provide a resource to others looking for similar services.

"I have felt supported from the moment I walked through the door," Driscoll said. "Hopefully this effort will continue to provide additional support as the group matures."

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.