WORKING FAMILIES ARE CHALLENGED with finding a healthy balance between work and family. People are working longer hours, affordable child care is hard to find and the number of working families caring for an elderly relative is on the increase.

Though some unions have bargained family-friendly provisions, many are unaware of members’ work and family challenges. Surveys for collective bargaining help identify member needs but they rarely contain work/family questions.

The following are questions that can be included on bargaining surveys and are intended as a first step to understanding the work and family responsibilities of members.

1a) It is difficult to balance my work life with my family life:
   __ Always __ Sometimes __ Never

1b) In the last two months I have missed work, arrived late or left early because of family responsibilities:
   __ Never __ 1–3 times __ 4–6 times __ 7–10 times __ 11+ times

2) Below is a list of the most common problems workers face in balancing work and family. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = “not a problem” to 5 = “a serious problem”), indicate which problems concern you:
   __ Long work hours
   __ Work shift
   __ Mandatory overtime
   __ Lack of paid leave for family emergencies
   __ Lack of flexible work hours in the workplace
   __ Missing work to care for a sick family member
   __ Lack of child/elder care services available during work hours
   __ Cost of child care
   __ Availability of quality child care
   __ Cost of elder care
   __ Availability of quality elder care
   __ Other (please state) _____________________
   __ Does not apply

3) Do you have child and/or elder care responsibilities?
   __ Child care __ Elder care
   __ Both __ Neither
   If so, what do you find most challenging?
   On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = “not a challenge” to 5 = “a serious challenge”), please rate in order of importance:
   __ Cost of quality care
   __ Availability of care during the hours I need it
   __ Missing work because of problems with child care or elder care
   __ Transportation problems
   __ Other (please state) _____________________

4) How often have you provided care for an elderly or disabled relative in the last two months? (“Care” includes accompanying the relative to doctor’s appointments, supervising his/her financial responsibilities, running errands and grocery shopping, cooking, helping with household chores, helping him/her dress, etc.)
   __ Never __ 1–5 times __ 6–10 times __ 11+ times __ Every day
5) What child care issues do you find to be the most challenging? Please rate in order of importance. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = “not an issue” to 5 = “a serious issue”), indicate how important each one is to you:

- Finding affordable, quality child care
- Finding child care close to home
- Finding child care close to work
- Finding care for a mildly sick child
- Getting son/daughter to child care
- Finding extended (before-/after-school, evening or weekend) care
- Finding child care during summer, holidays and school closings.
- Picking up son/daughter after school or child care
- Maintaining backup plans for last-minute emergencies
- Other (please state) ____________________
- Does not apply

NEXT STEP

The next step is to consider conducting a Needs Assessment Survey, which can provide useful information for future bargaining and organizing. Below are examples of questions designed to create a more detailed picture of members’ work/family challenges.

1) How many children, within each age group, are you responsible for?
   - None
   - Newborn–5 years
   - 6–10 years
   - 11+ years

2) In the last two months, how many times have you taken time off from work to care for a child or elderly relative or because of a family emergency?
   - Never
   - 1–3 times
   - 4–6 times
   - 7–10 times
   - 11+ times

3) In the last two months, how many times have you arrived late to work or left early because of child or elder care problems?
   - Never
   - 1–3 times
   - 4–6 times
   - 7–10 times
   - 11+ times

4) In the last two months, how many times have your regular child care plans been changed at the last minute?
   - Never
   - 1–3 times
   - 4–6 times
   - 7–10 times
   - 11+ times

5) Who provides care for your child(ren) while you are at work? (Check all that apply.)
   - Spouse/partner
   - Relative
   - Friend/neighbor
   - Older child
   - Licensed center
   - Family day care
   - Before-/after-school program
   - Child home alone
   - Other (please state) ____________________

6) Who provides care for your elderly relative while you are at work? (Check all that apply.)
   - Spouse/partner
   - Relative
   - Friend/neighbor
   - Home care worker
   - Institution (i.e. nursing home)
   - Adult day treatment
   - Able to care for themselves
   - Other (please state) ____________________
7) What types of programs would be most helpful to you in balancing your work and family life? On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = “not helpful” to 5 = “very helpful”), please rate the choices listed below:

__ More control over work hours  
   (voluntary overtime, flexible schedules, part-time, job sharing, telecommuting)
__ Paid sick leave for family members
__ Help with child care
__ Help with elder care
__ Other (please state) _____________________

For examples of work and family contract provisions, see *Bargaining Fact Sheets.*