

# PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL FOR WOMEN

## Top Five Suggestions for Supervisors of Women Trainees and Employees During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Although the initial phases of the shutdown are behind us, there is still a long journey ahead to normalcy. Anecdotal, and in some cases factual, evidence indicates working women are being disproportionately impacted by the collateral damage of the pandemic. The cumulative burden of home schooling, elderly at-risk parents, and the demands of three meals a day and all that entails, means that women may be sacrificing career aspirations to just hold it all together. The challenges may be ever harder for single parents or women of color who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and systemic racism. You, as a supervisor, can either be a source of frustration or a source of support and inspiration. We offer these suggestions to help you always be the latter.

1. **LISTEN** to their concerns. Ask powerful questions and don't make assumptions about their situation. Ask how you can help, what's working, and what's not working.
2. **BE VIGILANT** against your own hidden or internal bias. Are you now more tempted to give a desirable, high-profile project to another team member without additional responsibilities? Is seeing a different side of your trainee/employee as they hold a toddler in their lap altering your view of them professionally? Remember that all of us contain multitudes, and don't let the messiness of life creeping in distort your view of this person as an individual. They are still the same professional; they are just facing new challenges.
3. **SPONSOR** your trainee/employee by continuing to advocate for their advancement and growth. Your trainee/employee may be giving up opportunities to advance their career to prioritize core operational and maintenance activities instead.
4. **FIGHT** for systemic and structural change to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. Advocate for affordable child care and flexible schedules. Support women-owned businesses. Be a bridge and bring others into the conversation with empathy and nonjudgment.



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5. **BE FLEXIBLE.** Work is happening at all hours for those juggling additional responsibilities. An adjustment for all of us is not being able to walk down the hall or into the lab/clinic to check on the progress of a request in person. You do not know what is happening in the life of your trainee/employee at any given moment, and some are juggling responsibilities with partners. Ask them what times are best from them and recognize they may not always be able to give you an instantaneous response.

In addition to these five steps, we encourage you to **LAUGH** with your trainee/employee, **CELEBRATE** milestones, and **THANK** them for their hard work. Let them know they are seen.

