



Belonging and Excellence for All (BE4ALL) is a joint effort by SMART, SMACNA, and the ITI to create an industry-wide culture where everyone is welcome and belongs, including those from historically underrepresented groups, and where we all strive for the highest standards of performance and professionalism, resulting in a thriving unionized sheet metal industry that affirms the dignity and worth of us all. These Toolbox Talks are in support of this mission.

BE4ALL Toolbox Talk

Working Parents

The sheet metal industry is made up of individuals who pride themselves on hard work, skill, craftsmanship – and though work is a large part of every person's life, it is important to remember that every worker, foreperson, or business owner leads a full life beyond the workplace. Often, that includes a family.

Working parents make up a large and vital part of our workforce and seamlessly juggle the demands of both work and family. When they're supported, the entire industry benefits through improved retention, fewer absences, better focus on the job, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Challenges for Working Parents

Scheduling conflicts: Childcare hours and shift times don't always line up.

Unexpected family needs: Sick days, school closures, or a missing babysitter can throw routines off. Communicating circumstances with your leadership (supervisor, instructor, etc.) is respectful and important.

Training and advancement: Parents may find it harder to attend classes or take on overtime that could help their careers.

Financial pressures: Reliable childcare is costly, and lost hours can make it harder to stay afloat.

These challenges don't reflect a lack of dedication. They're the reality of balancing two full-time responsibilities: family and career.

What Does Support Look Like?

A supportive environment doesn't mean lowering expectations, it means ensuring everyone has a fair chance to meet them. Here are a few ways that all sides of our industry can help make that possible:

Celebrate parenthood: Recognize it as a valuable part of employees' lives that strengthens, not weakens, their leadership and empathy.

Model balance: Taking care of your family is part of being a professional and well-rounded tradesperson. Especially if you are in a leadership role, it is important to model the work-life balance that is necessary to excel in both your career and in parenthood.

Recognize that retention is important: When parents are forced out, we lose skilled members in our ranks. It is important to acknowledge that creating flexibility (when possible) is not special treatment, it is equity.

Normalize and facilitate family commitments: It's part of a balanced life, and when parents feel supported in occasionally taking time off to show up for their families, they are able to focus their full attention on work the other 99% of the time – rather than their performance being affected by the stress or guilt they may experience without flexibility.



Supporting working parents doesn't just help individuals. When we make it possible for skilled tradespeople to care for their families and build their careers, everyone benefits. Uplifting and empowering families strengthens the industry for generations to come.

Statistics

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, for **66%** of married couples with children in the United States, both parents are employed. This highlights how common working families are, and the importance of normalizing an experience that is shared by millions of people.

UrbanSitter's 2025 Working Parents & Child Care Report found that **68%** of working parents have had to make at least one career change due to childcare costs/challenges, such as reducing hours, declining promotions, or leaving the workforce altogether. These challenges can be mitigated by offering flexibility and being understanding of the stressors that workers may be facing beyond the workplace.

According to KPMG's Working Parents Survey, over half of working parents report that their work schedules frequently clash with their parenting duties, and **43%** of employed parents feel guilt for not spending enough time with their children. Allowing working parents the freedom to show up for their families when needed can decrease these feelings of guilt.

Resources

Check-in with your local union, local SMACNA chapter, contractor, and/or JATC for available resources to help you.



Use the link below or scan the QR code to fill out a survey to win a BE4ALL Tool Pouch!

<https://forms.office.com/r/m7drMnJUC6>





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BE4ALL Toolbox Talk Participation Sheet

Employer: _____

Location: _____

Presenter: _____

Date Presented: _____

Participant	Initials

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