

# AMERICA EMPLOYED

## INSIGHTS FROM EXPRESS EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

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## Single Parents in the American Workforce

### Express Owners Reveal Challenges Single Parent Workers Face

**OKLAHOMA CITY, Oct. 25, 2017** – Deb Gray, who runs a staffing company in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, will never forget Renee, a single mom, she first met in October 2016.

Renee managed her ex-husband's vehicle repossession business before going through a divorce and custody battle because of his drug addiction. She was hoping her experience in the mortgage business would translate into a job through Express Employment Professionals to support her now single income family, but the cyclical nature of the industry forced her to examine other options.

Renee's situation, of course, is not unique in America. According to the most recent numbers from the [Census Bureau](#), there are 11 million families with children under 18 and only one parent at home.

Deb Gray saw Renee's strong work ethic from the beginning and recommended her to multiple mortgage companies, but unfortunately, none were ready to offer an interview. In the meantime, Renee took multiple hospitality jobs until something better turned up.

#### HOW EMPLOYERS CAN SUPPORT SINGLE WORKING PARENTS

- 1 Be willing to trust the employee.
- 2 Be creative and provide flexible schedules.
- 3 Offer a bus pass, allow a later start time or let them make up hours.
- 4 Invest in them.
- 5 Care about the person.



"She was determined to get ahead in life, even if it meant working 80 hours a week," Gray said of Renee. "She was going to land a decent job, no matter what it took."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016 Employment Characteristics of Families report, last year the unemployment rate of married mothers with infants, at 3 percent, was substantially lower than the unemployment rate of mothers with other marital statuses, at 12.2 percent. Additionally, married fathers also continued to have a lower unemployment rate, at 2.6 percent, than fathers with other marital statuses, at 7 percent.

For Renee, this statistic wasn't just a number. It was a potential reality, and she was focused on becoming financially stable to provide for herself and her two young children, now ages 7 and 5.

Finally, Renee is on track to be hired on full-time at a mortgage company. The single mom was successful, Gray said because, despite her difficult circumstances, she kept her word and showed that no work was beneath her. She didn't point fingers, and she had an end game in mind.

Armando Reyneri, a recruiting manager at an Express office in Miami, Florida, relayed a similar experience working with a single mom named Yana. Yana has an autistic child, which makes being a working single mother even more challenging.

"I was able to place her on what was supposed to be a one-month assignment in August of 2016, and she is still there," Reyneri said. "The client is so impressed with her that the HR Manager does not want to end her assignment even though the person she was filling in for returned to work. So, they kept Yana helping their permanent employee. She already won our Employee of the Month Award in December of 2016.

"I have been working in the staffing industry for over 21 years, and I can honestly say I have never come across a more deserving person for this award. Yana has been doing all this great work while taking care of a special needs child on her own with very little help."

Since single parents often have more limitations on the type of work they can accept due to their children, Express office owner, Gray, identified some of the strategies that single parents use to secure work, despite the demands on their time:

- Enlist family and friends to help with childcare
- Be more flexible on work schedules, such as shift work
- Time management

She also noted that childcare and transportation are usually the biggest obstacles between these parents and a job.

In a recent survey of 573 businesses conducted by Express, 12 percent of owners reported applicants don't accept positions because of a lack of transportation. Another 9 percent cited inflexible schedules, while 5 percent said applicants could not find child care.

To help with these issues, Gray employs strategies of her own to support single working parents.

"Our recruiters are excellent in listening to the applicants' wants and needs and figuring out what is not said—challenges about schedules and transportation and working toward a job that is a match," she said.

When asked what business, community and national leaders could do to support the single parent workforce, Gray is quick with an answer.

"They should work to educate employers about how many underemployed want to work and find a company that engages them, supports them and trains them for the long term," she said. "Help them get out of the iterative process of working hard for too little money. Invest in them. Provide flexible schedules, and be creative. Maybe offer a bus pass, allow a later start time, or allow hours to be made up. Be willing to trust and get back to helping workers along. Overall, just care about the person."

Single parents face a unique set of challenges in finding and securing work, according to Bob Funk, CEO of Express, and a former chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

“In spite of that—or more likely, because of that—we find that they can be among the most dedicated workers,” he said. “While the day-to-day challenges of life often intervene, they find ways to make it work. As more employers hire single parents in the coming years, they should recognize the demands placed on these workers; a little flexibility can go a long way toward ensuring that parents can keep their jobs and employers can keep these stellar employees.”

The survey of 573 businesses, which are current and former clients of Express Employment Professionals, was conducted in August 2017 to gauge respondents’ expectations for the fourth quarter of 2017. Previous surveys were conducted to cover hiring trends of the quarters indicated.

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If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bob Funk to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Karami, Director of Corporate Communications and PR, at (405) 717-5966.

#### **About Robert A. Funk**

Robert A. “Bob” Funk is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 770 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Under his leadership, Express has put more than 6 million people to work worldwide. Funk served as Chairman of the Conference of Chairmen of the Federal Reserve and was also the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

#### **About Express Employment Professionals**

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.05 billion in sales and employed a record 510,000 people in 2016. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit [ExpressPros.com](http://ExpressPros.com).