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Journalist:	Saumya Bhattacharya	Page No:	14
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HUL Rolls Out Kinship Caregiver Leave Policy

Saumya.Bhattacharya
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: In a first initiative of its kind for corporate India, Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) has introduced a foster/kinship caregiver leave policy, offering up to four weeks of leave to employees who opt for pre-adoption foster care or become legal guardians as per their familial requirements.

This policy acknowledges diverse familial arrangements and expands the scope of family caregiving beyond the immediate family, the company said.

"The launch of the foster/kinship caregiver leave underscores our commitment to diversity and family wellbeing," Anuradha Razdan, executive director HR and chief HR officer of Unilever South Asia, told ET. "By pioneering this initiative, we aim to set a new standard for workplace support and foster a culture of care and empathy."

The policy ties in with the model guidelines for foster care introduced in 2015 by the women and child development ministry, and the Juvenile Justice Act, which has provisions for foster care.

Under the HUL policy, foster care is when you apply and become a guardian (not a parent) of a child through a local authority. In India, it's largely used as a pre-adoption procedure. However, it is not limited to adoption.

Kinship care is when an individu-



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al assumes the legal guardianship of a child who is a close relative.

"Our aim, as an organisation, is that we put out a bouquet of policies anticipating different lived realities and needs of employees, the most recent one is the one around kinship and foster care," Razdan said. "It allows our employees to choose based on their context, their circumstances, and it's a vital message for us to give out that we value all forms of caregiving," she added.

Presently, HUL offers a range of parental support options such as parental leave, adoption leave, secondary caregiver leave, and fertility support to enable equal parenting responsibilities. It has also established a creche tie-up for employees to ensure access to quality childcare facilities.

Pre-adoption foster care is an evolving landscape. There are diverse familial arrangements today that people opt for, either out of choice or

out of necessity. "We are aware and in tune with different realities. And it allows us to raise that conversation and awareness on inclusion for our line managers, employees and equally for the industry at large," Razdan said.

HUL's existing policies include additional medical coverage for employees with disabilities to give additional support for disability requirements that are not covered under the group insurance; psychological, counselling, financial, and medical support to employees who are survivors of abuse; gender transition policy to support employees in terms of medical support, leave/flexibility, counselling, and workplace transition for transgender employees on their transition journey; and career break policy to enable employees to take an extended period of unpaid leave from work to balance their career with other commitments, among others.