



JACK KUSTRON ■ FOR BUSINESS FIRST

Jackie Sparks cares for an OhioHealth employee's dogs as part of a concierge service aimed at helping workers balance family and work.

## OhioHealth staff getting some help

### Concierge available for errands

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OhioHealth executive Debra Plousha Moore says there is a clear-cut business goal behind the hospital system's decision to offer concierge services to its 12,000 employees.

"We want to brand ourselves as the employer of choice," said the hospital system's senior vice president of human resources and organizational development. "We

have to invest in our people to do that."

The concierge service, which debuted Dec. 6, is expected to help employees focus on patient care and other job duties while someone else handles their humdrum daily tasks. Those include shopping for groceries, picking up dry cleaning, wrapping gifts, booking a vacation, caring for pets or waiting on home repair appointments.

The only cost to employees  
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## CONCIERGE: Service to help employees focus on work

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is a charge of 36 cents a mile when the chore requires driving and \$5 for a same-day errand request.

The rest of the tab is subsidized by OhioHealth, parent company of Riverside Methodist, Grant and Doctors hospitals in Columbus.

"When you come to work and know your employer cares," Moore said, "you provide better service to the people in your care. That's human nature - the nature of the beast.

"We want to help our employees manage their work life and home life," she said. "To invest in our employees is to invest in our mission to provide better patient care."

### Productivity boost

Moore declined to project what OhioHealth expects to spend on the program but said she thinks being able to help time-strapped workers is "absolutely priceless."

The nonprofit hospital system can justify such an investment in its work force, she said, even at a time when rising medical costs are straining many companies' ability to provide health-care benefits for their employees.

"I hope the public will say we're an employer who understands the needs of our employees as these employees serve the community," Moore said. "If a nurse stays late to help your mom or dad, we can walk that (nurse's) dog."

Most companies can recover much of the cost of a concierge service through increased productivity of workers using the service, said Andrea Arena Novakoski, president and founder of Atlanta-based 2 Places at 1 Time, which is managing OhioHealth's program with five concierges initially.

Employees with access to a concierge, she said, tend to take off fewer days to run errands and are less likely to slip personal business into their workday.

Concierge services can also give an employer an edge when it comes to recruiting and retaining employees, Novakoski said.

That is especially the case in the health care field, which is facing shortages of nurses and medical technology workers.

Novakoski has been helping the hospital system prepare to launch the program since landing a contract last August. OhioHealth is 2 Places at 1 Time's first hospital system customer, Novakoski said, noting firms in accounting, business consulting and technology are the most likely to subsidize concierge services for employees.

Novakoski's 13-year-old company, which has 50 employees, serves 25 sites nationally, including ones operated by Motorola, Microsoft and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Columbus' other three hospital systems - Mount Carmel, Ohio State University Medical Center and Children's Hospital - don't offer concierge services to their workers.

"Health care has really just started adopting the concept of concierge in the last couple years," Novakoski said. "It's seen as a relatively progressive benefit - a concept that's viewed as being kind of 'New York, New York.'"

OhioHealth is offering concierge from a work-life balance perspective, she said.

"Hospitals can be incredibly demanding of their employees," she said. "It's not only time (concierge services) give them but peace of mind so they are able to focus on work more."

### Staying focused

2 Places at 1 Time will perform just about any service - except for manual labor and child or elder care - as long as it's legal and ethical, Novakoski said.

OhioHealth employees submitted 39 concierge requests in the first two days the service was offered. Among them were dropping off vehicles for repairs, shopping for Christmas presents, planning a vacation, walking pets and picking up groceries.

Lynne Genter, a clinical research nurse at Grant Medical Center, had a concierge walk her dogs, Twinkie and Rascal. Her husband, Roger, usually handles those midday duties but was out of town.

She also is asking for help with Christmas shopping and may seek assistance on taking packages to the post office.

"I think it's definitely worth the upstart costs (for OhioHealth) if it can keep people focused on their job," Genter said. "There are so many things we try to cram into a day. For staff nurses, there's no way they can get away on a 30- or 45-minute lunch break.

"I'm so excited about this," she said. "It's a grand idea."