

# Service, Please!

## Concierge Services Can Improve Staff Retention, Customer Care

A critical component of evidence-based design is the concept of paying attention to the patient.

In our increasingly consumer-driven economy, it is a dangerous proposition for a healthcare facility to put less than its best face forward at any time.

Consumers are generally well-informed, have high expectations for customer service, and are not afraid to exercise their right to hospital choice.

During new construction and renovations, it can be a challenge to maintain a stress-free environment and a welcoming atmosphere. One idea to maintain hospitality for patients is to offer concierge services that address inconveniences. Concierge services can keep both patients and staff pacified and even delighted during each phase of construction.

Valet parking and greeters can help newcomers navigate the often confusing maze of construction barriers at facilities that are open during construction.

In addition, concierges can provide everyday services that are offered to staff, patients and their families, such as personal errands, or information research. These types of services are appreciated with or without the confusion of construction.

"Typically, organizations interested in our service are looking for creative ways to recruit and retain talent," says Kirsten Lecky, vice president of business development for Best Upon Request, a

provider of concierge services.

Most employers choose to provide the service as part of the employees' benefits package, with customers only paying directly incurred expenses such as a dry cleaning bill.

The most frequently used services are personal shopping, automobile services, mail/shipping/stamps, information research, dry cleaning/laundry services.

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"We recognize how stressful it can be when confronted with a medical condition that requires hospitalization," says Debra Standridge, president of Wheaton Franciscan Health - St. Francis Hospital in Milwaukee. "Our concierge provider ... will help alleviate stress for patients and their families by taking care of many of life's details, allowing patients and families to focus on healing."

Sunrise Health in Las Vegas launched a patient concierge program

for its patients and families, the majority of whom are from out of town. The patient concierge can arrange hotel accommodations, make sure bills are in the mail, or provide emergency clothing.

### Employee Benefits

Concierge services for employees promote work/life balance and retention, among other benefits.

According to one healthcare provider with concierge services, its client survey responses indicate that employees saved an average of two hours for each concierge service request. Half of them report putting that time back into their work.

More than 90 percent say that the services reduced their stress and helped them balance their work duties with their personal lives.

HealthONE care network in Denver enjoyed lower turnover rates only by 11 percent to 16 percent one year after offering concierge services at three of its hospitals. Bronson Healthcare Group in Michigan documented an overall reduction in staff turnover of more than 55 percent after the third year of service. Bronson's recruiting costs also fell an estimated \$250,000 annually.

Other less quantifiable results are improved employee satisfaction, decreased absenteeism and increased patient satisfaction.

### Survey Examines Remote Access

GOLETA, Calif. — Almost a third of healthcare workers use remote access technology to perform part of their jobs away from hospitals and offices during business and non-business hours, according to a recent survey.

The survey by Citrix Online, a Goleta, Calif.-based company that focuses on software and services specializing in virtualization and remote access software, found that 32 percent of respondents travel off-site several times a month to a work-related meeting or job site. Some of these workers use secure remote access while traveling or working offsite, allowing them to stay connected and minimize downtime.

Nearly 50 percent reported traveling offsite for work several times a year, while 19 percent are required to work away from the office several times a week.

Respondents considered the following uses of remote access technology important when performing job duties offsite, according to the survey:

- 61 percent find the technology increases productivity by providing access to e-mail, data and files.
- 59 percent report remote access offers doctors secure, any-time access to patient files and data from virtually any location.
- 36 percent find the technology useful because it allows remote transcription and medical coding.
- 71 percent report the technology increases workforce productivity.
- 67 percent say remote access enables secure access to critical data.

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