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Care.com gives MSU the leading edge

In its first year, the Care.com solution has resulted in a \$1.2 million net benefit to MSU

95%

of MSU respondents said they would recommend Care.com to a friend or colleague at the University.

95%

said that having the Care.com benefit made them less stressed and better able to focus on work.

50%

of MSU respondents said that using Care.com let them work ten or more hours on campus that they would otherwise have been forced to spend on caregiving responsibilities.

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“ Life happens, good and bad, and Care.com helps us solve the work-life puzzle. **”**

—Lori Strom, Family Resource Center, MSU

The campus of Michigan State University is bustling with over 57,000 students, faculty and staff. Spartan turf is energized with exceptional academics, world renowned research and of course, Big Ten Pride. But busy lives have complications. And that's where Lori Strom comes in. Director of the Family Resource Center at MSU, Strom helps the university community be productive on campus while managing the inevitable demands of personal life. "Life happens, good and bad, and Care.com helps us solve the work-life puzzle," Strom says. She helped handpick Care.com as a resource for the MSU community to find child care, housekeeping services, pet care and help for elderly parents. Why? "The work-life issues facing this vast population are complex and diverse," she explains. "Care.com offers the 24/7 flexibility and ease of use that is essential to meeting our community's caregiving needs."

Over the years, researchers have built an impressive body of evidence to prove that such benefits are far more than a feel-good initiative—access to caregiver support is vital to workforce performance and productivity.

According to a major study by AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving, individuals with significant caregiving responsibilities are often forced to take a leave of absence, shift from a full-time to a part-time schedule, sacrifice specific job benefits or even resign altogether.¹ More than 65 million people in the US are family caregivers, and of these, more than 60% have taken time from work to deal with caregiving issues.² And it's not just individual caregivers who bear the brunt of the caregiving crisis. 72% of work absenteeism is due to child care related issues, according to the US Department of Labor. In addition, these incidental unplanned absences result in the highest net loss of productivity and, on average, 35% of base payroll is attributed to employee absences.³



The MSU commitment to work-life support

Having made the commitment to work-life programs in the early 1990s, MSU is in a unique position to help reduce the stresses faced by caregiving employees. The mission of the MSU Family Resource Center is to provide the MSU community with the best possible tools to stay productive on campus while managing the demands of family life. Care.com offers support for the full lifecycle of needs, from child care to elder care. Strom says, "Child care is the number one issue for students, faculty and other employees." But in spite of the excellent care options on campus, she explains that there is no way MSU can possibly provide enough coverage to address the scope and variety of demand. No amount of day care centers would help support every family's needs. "We have cafeteria workers who stay on campus well into the night, physical plant staff who work 24 hour shifts," she says. "What if someone has to work late, or a student has a group study project on Wednesday night?" That's where Care.com comes in.

 MSU can't build 25 day care centers, but we can give students and employees the tools they need to hire at home and do so on their own terms. 

—Lori Strom, Family Resource Center, MSU

One-stop shopping at Care.com

Founded in 2006, Care.com is the largest and fastest growing service used for finding high-quality care providers, making it easy for families and individuals to locate caregivers close to home—or anywhere in the country. “Care.com is a one-stop shop for babysitters, nannies, senior/elder care support, housekeepers, tutors and even pet sitters. The Care.com website allows you to view detailed profiles of care providers. You can search according to your requirements: experience, hourly rate, availability and more,” notes Strom.

The comprehensive approach to finding childcare described above is what sets Care.com apart from other services. Designed with ease of use in mind, Care.com gives individuals 24/7 access to care providers for everyday, occasional or back-up care. Users can either search for providers or post a job to have candidates apply directly. The user-friendly interface and powerful search tools make it easy for Care.com members to use the service independently.

“It’s such an easy system to use,” says Holly Brophy-Herb, Ph.D., Associate Professor in Human Development and Family Studies. “It’s not just you out there alone searching, but you in a system that offers layers of screening and security tools. That’s very comforting to a parent.”

“

It's so easy.

You can find caregivers close to home, read profiles, search for special skills, check availability, request references and check screenings.

”

**-Holly Brophy-Herb,
Associate Professor,
Human Development
and Family Studies, MSU**

Why Care.com?

As an organization that takes work-life balance very seriously, MSU was looking for a high-quality care solution to address the broad needs of faculty, staff and students all over the country. Several factors figured prominently in MSU's decision to provide Care.com as a benefit. Strom cites Care.com's ease of use and accessibility, cost-effective pricing, and the variety of care offered nationwide as some of the key reasons for choosing Care.com.

As the coordinator of the Family Resource Center, Lori Strom says that one of the great things about Care.com is its national presence and geographic scope. “If you are at MSU but your elderly mom needs help in Chicago, you can use Care.com to find caregivers that live near her. If you are a professor with a conference in Atlanta but you have a still-nursing baby, you can find someone to watch your baby in the conference hotel while you give your presentation.”

Jennifer Decker, who works full-time for the MSU Alumni Association, agrees: “Care.com came in handy when my 86-year-old father fell and broke his arm. I was going to have to drive 40 miles round trip to walk his dog twice daily. With Care.com, I found a person who lives less than a mile away and can walk the dog at 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. The care provider we found was perfect. She not only walked the dog, but brought in the groceries and mail, which my father could no longer do. And I received other responses on Care.com, so we can find back-up care if I need it.”

“ Care.com is a lifesaver for me. ”

—Jennefer Decker, Alumni Engagement office, MSU

Strom adds that security was another major factor. “They really go out of their way,” she says. To establish safeguards, Care.com provides access to background checks, provider reviews, and recorded references. “It was so reassuring that I could trust and depend on Care.com,” Decker says.

The Care.com Workplace Solutions program

Employers can take advantage of Care.com's Workplace Solutions program to give staff a comprehensive solution for finding care providers. Care.com can be a primary resource for employees, or an integral part of an organization's comprehensive benefits program.

“I was impressed with the caliber of the Care.com team, their willingness to trouble shoot and problem solve. **”**

—Lori Strom, Family Resource Center, MSU

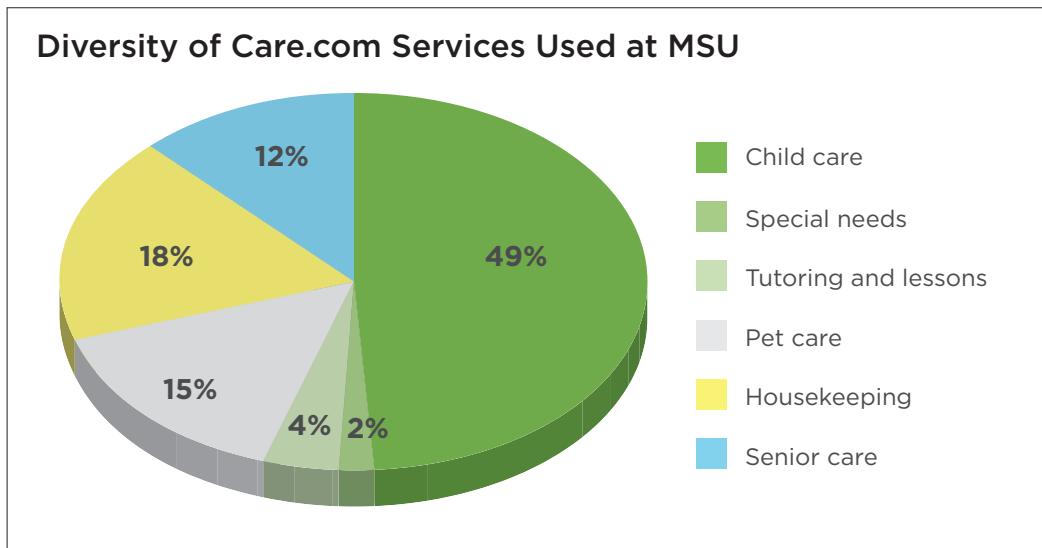
In addition to providing an account management team, Care.com offers onsite seminars and web events to help employees make the most of their Care.com benefit. “Care.com is creative and innovative, offering webinars on subjects such as back-up care, which people can access on their computers from any location,” Strom adds.

Measuring success

Less stressed and more productive faculty, staff, and students. The MSU community has embraced Care.com. In a recent survey, a remarkable 95% of MSU respondents said they would recommend Care.com to a friend or colleague at the University. And 50% of MSU respondents said that using Care.com let them work ten or more hours on campus that they would otherwise have been forced to spend on caregiving responsibilities. **95% said that having the Care.com benefit made them less stressed and better able to focus on work.** As one MSU graduate student explains, “[Care.com gives] me more hours to work during a critical crunch time in my studies.”



Care for all. The MSU community has turned to Care.com for a variety of services, emphasizing the importance of the breadth of offerings. While more than half of faculty, staff, and students surveyed have used Care.com to find childcare, 18% have used Care.com to find housekeeping services, 15% accessed pet care services, 12% sought senior care services, 4% looked for tutoring/lessons, and 2% found special needs care. This diversity of usage demonstrates the wide array of needs the MSU community has been able to address with the Care.com solution. From primary care to back-up care to occasional or after school care, Care.com can help.



Recruiting & retaining the best and the brightest. “It’s about quality of life,” says Strom. “We are a huge institution—we have over 500 buildings on the main campus. I try to personalize services so that people here know MSU is sensitive to their needs. They say ‘this is the value the University places on me. I will be a better student or employee—less distracted, more focused.’ This support builds loyalty and it’s a recruitment and retention issue. If child care is falling through or you need to leave work to support your elderly father, you may have to quit. We don’t want that to happen.”

For faculty like Holly Brophy-Herb, the message of support comes through loud and clear. “It’s a clear, obvious action on behalf of the university that recognizes the struggle to balance work and family. MSU has responded by saying ‘here is how we can help.’ Lori Strom and the Family Resource Center do incredible things. Instead of spending time looking for child care, I am writing grants and papers. Care.com allows me to work more efficiently.” Brophy-Herb is not alone; an overwhelming **95% of respondents said it mattered to them that the University provided the Care.com benefit.**

Return on investment. In its first year, the Care.com solution has resulted in a \$1.2 million net benefit to MSU. The benefit has contributed to decreased absenteeism through the use of back-up care, as well as elevated productivity of faculty, staff and students. In addition, loyalty has increased as the MSU community recognizes that the University's clear commitment to work-life helps them be more productive at work and relaxed at home.

The bottom line, says Strom, is:

 This kind of benefit is a way to hire and retain the 'best and the brightest'. 

—Lori Strom, Family Resource Center, MSU

¹National Alliance for Caregiving with AARP and MetLife, 2004

²Caregiving in the US Survey, NAC & AARP, 2010

³Survey on Total Financial Impact of Employee Absences, Mercer, 2010.



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