

Sharp HealthCare: Support for Frontline Employees and their Families

How **Care Benefits** Support Healthcare
Employees at San Diego County's
Largest Private Employer



About Sharp HealthCare

As the leading healthcare provider and largest private employer in San Diego (with 19,000 employees and 2,700 affiliated physicians), Sharp HealthCare is dedicated to improving health outcomes for patients. Sharp's mission is to provide accessible, convenient, cost-effective, and patient-centered care that not only meets, but exceeds, expectations.

Their people-first approach comes through in everything they do, from the care and attention shown to their patients, to creating a competitive, equitable benefit strategy for their employees that supports them at every stage of their career and life.

As is common in the healthcare industry, the staff is predominantly women, with female employees accounting for 73% of the staff at Sharp, with an average tenure of 10 to 11 years.

"Our workforce is very diverse," says Michael Janniere, Director of Benefits, Sharp HealthCare. "We have individuals from all different lifestyles and it's important to us to meet the needs of all our employees."

To do this, they offer a generous paid-leave policy (new employees start with 25 days of paid time off their first year), wellness programs (which include healthy cafeteria options, free yoga classes, and health coaches), and family care benefits through Care for Business.

Why Sharp Needed Care

Sharp operates four acute-care hospitals, three specialty hospitals, three affiliated medical groups, and several office and urgent care locations throughout San Diego County. In 2020, during the height of the pandemic, Sharp and its employees found themselves on the frontlines in the battle against COVID-19. Hospitals can't care for patients if their staff can't come to work, and staff can't come to work unless their loved ones have safe and reliable care. With schools and daycares closing around the country, and many households self-isolating, this proved to be a major challenge.

To support their employees—and the critical needs of their community—Sharp leadership knew that they needed to find a care solution that would provide their employees with resources to care for their loved ones, so they could in turn support their community at work.

"There was a shortage of child care options for employees," said Janniere. "Employees were reaching out to us during the pandemic to say, 'I want to come to work, but I don't have an option for child care,' and we knew we needed to figure out a resource (to help them)."

One option that was a non-starter was an on-site daycare facility. Because Sharp has multiple locations scattered across greater San Diego, they needed a care option that

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provided flexibility for where employees could access care—not one static location. Plus, a daycare would only provide relief to employees with children. Staff who needed to find care for an elderly loved one or a pet would be left out.

“There’s a real challenge geographically, with both clinics and hospitals throughout the county,” said Lisa Allen, Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Talent Management at Sharp HealthCare. “We couldn’t provide one center where folks could bring their children. We really had to think about a creative solution to make it easier to provide resources so employees could find care where they need it.”

The Care Solution

Sharp partnered with Care for Business to give employees unlimited access to the [Care Membership](#) and [Backup Care](#).

“One of the challenges of being a working parent is finding appropriate child care,” said Patricia O’bee, Technical Site Analyst at Sharp HealthCare. “Because I work in healthcare and as site support, I have to be here every single day. During the pandemic, I was never in lockdown, I never experienced that. So having care for my child was crucial.”

With the Care Membership, employees can find a vetted caregiver for children, adults, and pets, as well as housekeepers and tutors—which was a welcome relief for many users as children were forced to attend school remotely for months on end.

Many of the nurses on staff had children at home, or parents or pets they were caring for. If their regular care fell through, it often meant the employee couldn’t come into work. The Backup Care benefit meant that Sharp staff had an employer-subsidized solution to find vetted, flexible care—including the option to use someone in their own personal network.

Employees Care

After launching the program, the Sharp team immediately noticed the impact Care benefits had on their staff, particularly the addition of Backup Care for their children and adult loved ones.

“When COVID-19 hit, I didn’t really know where I was going to find care,” said O’bee. “My son has special needs, so putting him in just any daycare facility wasn’t going to be suitable. The fact that Care.com had individual care where a person can come to my home was amazing. My child got to do new things that he doesn’t usually get to do in a daycare facility—or in school. He actually really enjoyed that, and looked forward to having a Care visitor.”

The ease of use in finding care was another plus for employees. Care has a mobile app and online platform that makes it easy for employees to find, schedule, and pay for care.

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“The feedback that I hear often is how easy it is to use, and that they were able to find a care resource so quickly whenever they needed it,” said Janniére.

Allen has a regular caregiver that helps out with her elderly mother, but when that caregiver needed to take some time off, Allen turned to Care.com for help.

“My mother is 88 going on 89 and has dementia,” said Allen. “We have a regular caregiver who needed to be away for a couple of weeks, and it was just a really tough time in the world to find alternate resources. With Care I was able to identify someone to come in as a backup caregiver—which is a really powerful benefit.”

The Care Solution

Care benefits are making a big impact. Backup Care alone saved Sharp doctors, nurses, and staff more than 4,500 days of missed work in just six months. In the second year since launch, they’re seeing a healthy 10% enrollment and 34% overall utilization of the program benefits.

While the utilization data proves their return on investment, the overwhelming positive feedback from employees is what really matters. “We run an annual engagement survey and the feedback we received is that people really appreciate our benefits,” said Allen.

Care benefits also serve as a key tool in meeting Sharp’s goal of retaining top talent—a critical need during the height of COVID-19. “We’ve all been challenged in healthcare during this pandemic to retain our employees,” said Allen. “I know for a fact there have been people who felt like we showed up for them at a time that they really needed it. We made good on a promise to care for our caregivers, and most employees didn’t see any other organization doing that in the way that we did.”

Offering care benefits is also having a positive impact on Sharp’s ability to be seen as an employer of choice, and to attract a steady stream of new applicants. “Not only were we able to meet the needs of our employees that are here, but it also helped in our recruiting efforts,” said Janniére. “Offering care benefits has helped us to stand out in the San Diego market because we’re the only ones that are really doing this.”

As an employee, O’bee agrees, saying that working for a company that offered care benefits made her feel supported on the job. “It really means a lot to me to know that my company supports the needs of women who work and have children at home,” said O’bee. “I haven’t ever worked at a job that has given me any type of child care benefits. And the fact that Sharp is doing that really shows to me that they care about their employees and their families—and that our personal lives matter.”

Care for Business has made a difference for Sharp employees across San Diego County, supporting their overall mission to support their community with patient-centered healthcare.

Backup Care saved
4,500+ workdays
in 6 months

10%
Employee Enrollment
in second year

34%
Overall Utilization
of program benefits