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Sittercity pilot program to help fulltime teaching faculty address dependent-care needs

Caregiver locating service available to eligible faculty

The challenge of providing quality care for dependent family members poses some of the greatest obstacles to career advancement for tenure-track faculty nationwide. But, beginning next month, fulltime, tenured/tenure-track teaching faculty at WSU will have a new tool to help them find qualified caregivers to meet a variety of needs—from babysitting to eldercare, plus pet-sitting, housekeeping, and tutoring.

ADVANCE at WSU is offering the Sittercity Family Program for a limited time at no cost to eligible WSU faculty as part of ADVANCE’s mission to support faculty success and institutional transformation. Sittercity is a web-based resource that helps participants connect with prescreened care providers available for hire locally and nationwide.

"Helping our faculty manage the complex issues of providing care for dependent children or elderly parents is an important focus of WSU's ADVANCE program,” said Nancy Magnuson, professor of molecular biosciences and director of ADVANCE at WSU. "ADVANCE supports faculty excellence by fostering an inclusive work environment that benefits the entire University. We hope this pilot program will be an effective resource to help faculty balance the often-competing demands of work and family life.”

Sittercity.com offers an online network of more than 2 million caregiver profiles nationwide to help care seekers find and select in-home providers quickly and easily. Participants can use the company's four-step screening process, which includes checking references, reading caregiver reviews, conducting interviews, and utilizing free access to background checks. Caregiver profiles contain photos, experience, training, safety skills, availability calendars, parent reviews, and more.

Eligible WSU faculty will receive an email at their WSU addresses explaining how to register for Sittercity when the service launches Feb. 1, 2012. Participants will have access through June 30, 2013 to the online service to find everyday or backup care, such as:

- Babysitters—for after school, extended work hours, school holidays, special needs children
- Eldercare providers—from companions to licensed nurses
- Nannies—for full and part time infant and youth care
- Pet sitters and dog walkers
- Tutors
- Housekeepers
When faculty members travel to conferences, they can find information about babysitters and other caregivers in most U.S. cities. They can also find ongoing care for aging parents who might live in another state.

"I can imagine many ways this service could be used to help balance the needs of professional and family life," said Aurora Clark, associate professor of chemistry. "Like many faculty members, I have no extended family in this area, and since both my husband and I work at WSU, short-term care for a sick child can often be a big issue and conflict with teaching schedules. I look forward to using Sittercity to create a network of care providers that we can rely on."

"I think many members of our faculty—including myself—will find this program extremely useful," said Saonee Sarker, associate professor and chair of the Department of Management, Information Systems, and Entrepreneurship, and president of the Association for Faculty Women. "I hope everyone who's eligible will take advantage of this valuable new resource. I want to thank ADVANCE at WSU for initiating and promoting this excellent program."

Faculty use and satisfaction with the Sittercity Family Program will be evaluated throughout the first year to determine its contribution to the University.

For more information, contact Sandy Watson, program coordinator, at advance@wsu.edu.