



Modern Healthcare

Beyond The Scrubs: How Uniform Allotment Programs Boost Business and Clinical Goals in Healthcare

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Budget control. Time efficiency. Brand consistency. These are just a few factors at the forefront of healthcare decision makers' minds when considering a uniform program for their employees. But where to start? Healthcare leaders are noting that more than ever, a robust work apparel program is essential to operational efficiency, budget management, employee engagement, and ultimately and most importantly, patient care quality.

Michelle Antonucci, Director of HR Shared Services Operations at VNS Health in New York, offers an excellent perspective on allotment programs as a game-changing solution that aligns both business and clinical goals in the healthcare space. She shares her insights into how the VNS Health allotment program through Design Collective by Cintas addresses challenges common to healthcare facilities.

How does the allotment program work within the healthcare space?

Allotment programs provide a great automated solution to the uniform ordering process, creating a seamless user experience for employees to utilize while staying within the parameters of a healthcare system's branding standards and requirements. Customers can decide to set up this type of program using either a dollar or unit allotment, which helps control their annual budget. Employees log in to the Cintas Website using specific login credentials and then are routed to a customized website showing the various options within the program that have been established by the customer.

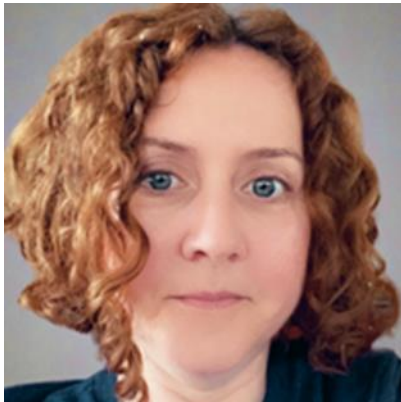
The allotments are based on rules and parameters that are set up within the HRMS, based on job profile, standard hours and hire/transfer date (eligibility date). These data points determine how many allotments a person receives at hire and each year thereafter. This data — along with the person's name, home address and cost center (for billing purposes) — is compiled into a weekly file and sent to Cintas. Employees receive an email from Cintas when it is time for their allotment, and the employee then uses a SSO log in to select items based on their program. Employees also have the option to purchase items out of pocket if they have already met their allotment for the year or would like to reserve their allotment for future use.

Is there a minimum or maximum number of garments a customer can have? If so, what is the typical range for healthcare facilities of your size?

Allotment programs allow customers full autonomy. There are no minimum or maximum amounts that can be loaded into an allotment program - customers are able to decide the scope for themselves. When using a dollar allotment there is no specified threshold, but the allotted load can range anywhere from \$100-\$1,000 per employee, with each unit allotment consisting of four units to 10 units in total. This is all dependent on the type of program (clinical/clerical), whether the employee is full-time, part-time or per diem, and whether the employee is a new hire or an existing employee needing an annual refresh.

What are the benefits from an employee perspective?

Employees have the autonomy to build their desired wardrobe when placing orders; they can choose between an assortment of different garments or even color options. They have access to an online website portal specific to their employer where they can shop for and purchase their wardrobe based on their employer's guidelines. It ultimately fosters a sense of ownership and individuality, but also pride and belonging in their workplace. Employees can view the most current catalog and order items at their leisure without relying on a set schedule. This system also allows them to order items out-of-pocket if they have used up their allotment for the year.



Michelle Antonucci, Director of HR Shared Services Operations at VNS Health in New York

What feedback have you heard from former or current customers?

Customers have spoken highly about their allotment programs. They report a great user experience, and its ease of operation is an enticing factor. It takes the manual work out of running a uniform program and automates all aspects of the program, creating a smooth transaction and satisfied employees.

How do you communicate the program as an investment to your employees?

It's vital to recognize employees for their efforts as they are the heart of any business. Healthcare is no different. Implementing a uniform allotment program has shown to be a huge investment in the brand of the health system and is strongly reflected in the people that make up that brand.

Does this program work for any type of healthcare client, be it a clinical or non-clinical setting?

Allotment programs work for both clinical and non-clinical healthcare systems and are created to provide apparel for all types of job functions within that system.

How important is it to establish a color-coded uniform program in healthcare facilities?

Establishing a color-coded uniform program is essential in healthcare facilities. It allows employees to be easily identified by patients, families and fellow employees. This bolsters the quality of care and safety for everyone involved. The items in the VNS Health catalog are limited to a few colors that represent the VNS Health brand, and all are embroidered with the VNS Health logo. This paired with the clinician's Employee ID card helps the patient identify the clinician, fostering the patient's confidence in their quality of care, safety and overall satisfaction.

How does this affect employee morale?

Employee morale generally has been shown to improve whenever a new uniform program is rolled out. The revitalization of a program elicits a sense of excitement from employees when they see their employer taking the initiative to invest in them. When donning their new apparel, a team culture and shared image is created. Uniforms that not only reflect an agency's brand but are also comfortable to wear help employees feel connected and professional.

Is the patient experience for allotment programs different for acute vs. non-acute facilities?

There is not a significant difference in the patient experience between acute and non-acute healthcare environments. Both types of facilities can be positively impacted by the implementation of an allotment program.

Modern Healthcare was established in 1974 and written for hospital and health system executives as an industry-intensive news source. Editorial concentrates on issues, news and trends affecting healthcare in the United States and provides information to healthcare professionals on topics including finance, integrated delivery systems, technology, politics, labor, managed care, physician issues, developments in federal and state government, court rulings, policy and regulation and marketing. There is a particular emphasis on coverage of electronic medical records. Regular features provide up to the minute news and trends in the healthcare field and discusses physician issues, innovative strategies and studies, future developments within this field and personnel updates. The outlet reaches an audience of 316,895 through articles and social media.