



The Benefits Group, Inc.

Member of Connecticut Health Partnership
Member of the CT Better Business Bureau



Your Healthcare Benefit Source

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Health Care Reform: PPACA

The PPACA, Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is still in the process of definition and interpretation. Some changes will become effective at your next renewal and the rest will be made gradually through 2018. Your agent will be able to give you information as it pertains to your company.



In the meantime, there are many sources to consult if you have questions, including your health insurance carrier's website, www.whitehouse.gov and www.irs.gov.

Please circulate this newsletter to:

- Human Resources
- Accounts Receivable
- Insurance/Plan Administrator
- Post on employee bulletin board

New COBRA Rules

The State of Connecticut COBRA has been extended to 30 months, from the current 18 months, for employees who terminate coverage. Those currently on COBRA can extend their coverage for an additional 12 months. This is separate from the ARRA subsidy law; this change strictly related to the number of months that former employees qualify for.



Good News!

Yes, there is some *good news!* As part of the new PPACA health care reform act small employers who contribute towards the cost of their employees health insurance may qualify for a small business tax credit which can be claimed as part of the general business credit on your 2010 tax return.

Here are some of the basic guidelines and qualifications:

- **Providing health care coverage.** A qualifying employer must cover at least 50 percent of the cost of health care coverage for some of its workers based on the single rate.
- **Firm size.** A qualifying employer must have less than the equivalent of 25 full-time workers (for example, an employer with fewer than 50 half-time workers may be eligible).
- **Average annual wage.** A qualifying employer must pay average annual wages below \$50,000.
- **Both taxable (for profit) and tax-exempt firms qualify**
- **Maximum Amount.** The credit is worth *up to* 35 percent of a small business' premium costs in 2010. On Jan. 1, 2014, this rate increases to 50 percent (35 percent for tax-exempt employers).
- **Phase-out.** The credit phases out gradually for firms with average wages between \$25,000 and \$50,000 and for firms with the equivalent of between 10 and 25 full-time workers.



For more detailed information or to determine if your small business or tax exempt organization qualifies for the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit, please visit <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=223666,00.html>.



Watch Out for Health Insurance Scams!!

Unfortunately, it seems that any time there are changes, the con artists and scammers come out of the woodwork. Now that the health care reform bill has passed, the State of CT Insurance Department is warning consumers about people selling "ObamaCare" insurance door to door and with false 800 #'s claiming consumers have a 'limited time' to enroll for new insurance, which is not true. The Insurance Commissioner wants everyone to be aware so that no one falls victim to these scams.

Summer Hours



The Benefits Group will be closing at 1 pm on Friday's from June 25th through September 3rd.
Happy Summer!

Doctor Office Visit Tidbits

When making an appointment to visit your doctor or for tests, be sure to specify that it is for **preventive or routine** tests when appropriate. Please keep in mind that if the test is required based on your past health history or you are symptomatic then it is no longer considered preventive and you will be subject to any copays or deductibles associated with the testing.

Another office visit tidbit: if you have an illness and discuss it with your doctor during a preventive or routine visit, your doctor **can** bill the insurance carrier separately for the routine exam and sick visit and charge you for an office visit, whether it's a copay or it goes towards your HSA deductible. Please check your policy or contact your insurance carrier if you have specific questions about benefits.



Due Dates for Health Insurance Bills

Health insurance premiums are billed in advance. For example, the August 1st due date is for coverage during August. The carriers do offer a grace period, however, the premium **must be received** by the last day of the month or reinstatement fees will apply (Anthem now charges a \$150 fee). It doesn't matter if the check was *mailed* prior to the last day, if the premium is not **in their office** on the last business day of the month, then you will owe the reinstatement fee.



Please note that as agents, we have no control over this fee and cannot get it waived. If you do not pay it, the fee will be deducted from your next premium payment and leave your premium payment short for that month. The insurance carrier will then either cancel your coverage for not paying the entire premium or charge you another late fee. If it is getting late in the month and you haven't paid your bill, please call your billing representative to make arrangements or pay over the phone.

Voluntary Life and Disability Benefits

Voluntary employee benefits are a great way to offer quality benefits at group prices for employees. UNUM Life Insurance Company offers life and disability products which are affordably priced and portable; this means that if an employee leaves your company, they can take their coverage with them at the same affordable group rates. Contact your broker for more information.



Did You Know??

During a recent investigation by a reputable and popular TV program, we learned that copy machines have internal hard drives. Unless the hard drive is erased when the copier is replaced, all the data that was ever copied on it is still on it and available to anyone that can download the information. There are companies that buy these used copy machines off lease and sell them over seas - potentially loaded with your personal information and your clients! Be sure to ask your leasing company what their practices are. In addition, you may want to ask the companies you deal with for personal and business matters if they are aware of this and take action to make sure your private information is secure.



Please be assured that The Benefits Group leases its copier from a reputable company which always erases the hard drive to protect our clients so that we stay in compliance with HIPAA privacy laws.

It's Renewal Time!

We know your time is valuable and so are the benefits you provide for your employees. During renewal time, please make time to visit with your broker. Health insurance is likely your biggest expense after payroll and we need the time to explore all your options and answer your questions about health reform. Please schedule appointments promptly so we have time to make any necessary changes to your plan.



CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!

Your employees may have a son or daughter graduating from high school or college and may or may not be eligible to continue their medical insurance as a dependent. On January 1, 2009, Connecticut introduced a new law to cover certain dependents to age 26, which is superior to the new ObamaCare law regarding dependents. Please check your policy for details.



If you have questions regarding COBRA for dependents, individual medical policies, or short term medical insurance, please call us.

Employers and employees should periodically update personal and group life insurance beneficiaries. Make this a practice during the annual open enrollment; it's a good time to review all aspects of your insurance benefits.



If you would prefer to receive this newsletter via email, please send your request to Nancy at Nmccaughey@thebenefitsgroupofct.com and she'll email the next newsletter to you.

