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HR Newsletter

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2011 Federal Health Benefit Changes

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has certain provisions that affect the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) and Federal Flexible Spending Account (FSA) beginning January 1, 2011. Below are the changes.

FEHB: Children are covered under their parent's FEHB health plan's self and family enrollment until age 26.

- Children between age 22 and 26 are covered under their parent's self and family enrollment up to age 26.
- Married children (but NOT their spouses or their own children) are covered up to age 26.
- Children who are eligible for or have their own employer provided health insurance are eligible for coverage up to age 26.
- Stepchildren are eligible for coverage up to age 26.
- Foster children are eligible for coverage up to age 26.

Employees who are currently enrolled in Self and Family need to contact their FEHB plan provider and provide them with the child or children's information.

Employees who are currently enrolled in Self only need to make a election to be covered under Self and Family. This change can be made as a Qualifying Life Event (QLE) from 31 days before to 60 days after January 1, 2011. Elections will be effective on the first pay period that includes January 1, 2011 and the coverage is effective January 1, 2011.

This change can also be made during open season. The change will be effective January 2, 2011.

FSA: Beginning January 1, 2011 current over-the-counter (OTC) products such as medicines or drugs will not be eligible for reimbursement from a Health Care FSA unless the enrollee has a prescription from January 1, 2011 forward. Other eligible OTC items that are not medicines or drugs will not require a prescription.

Beginning January 1, 2011 reimbursement for eligible health care expenses will no longer be limited to children who are living with the employee or a tax dependent.

The ACA does not affect Dependent Care FSAs.

The ACA does not affect any other federal benefit programs such as Federal Dental and Vision programs, FEGLI or LTCIP.

Employees interested in finding more information on 2011 FEHB plans, changes, rates and options should visit OPM's website:

www.opm.gov/insure

2011 FEHB information will be posted on their site in late October.

Employees interested in finding out more information on changes to FSA should visit FSA's website:

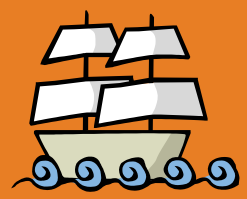
www.fsafeds.com

2011 FSA information will be posted on their site in late October.

Employee questions should be directed to your HR Assistant.

Special points of interest:

- October 11, 2010 is a Federal Holiday, HR will be closed.



Performance Appraisal Plans and Award Reminders

Managers and Supervisors are reminded that the appraisal period for employees will end on September 30, 2010. A rating of record should be completed within 30 days following completion of the appraisal period. FY2010 Employee Performance Appraisal Plans (EPAP) are due to Sheri in HR by close of business **November 19, 2010.**

Also, all performance awards pertaining to FY2010 EPAP's, including Quality Step Increases (QSIs) are due to Human Resources by close of business **November 19, 2010**. Supervisors who are looking for a copy of the DOI Awards form (DI-541) can find a pdf version on our HR website, under "forms".

Managers and Supervisors are also being reminded that performance plans for FY2011 must be established by November 30, 2010, which is 60 days from the beginning of the new performance cycle.

We have been notified that there will be a new Supervisory EPAP form, hopefully we will receive the form and changes before November 30. The employee EPAP form will not change, you can use the form dated September 2009.

Questions concerning Awards and EPAPs should be directed to Sheri Kososik at ext. 5527.

Federal Benefits Open Season

The 2010 Federal Benefits Open Season for the 2011 plan year will begin Monday November 8th and run thru December 6th.

During this time, employees will be able to make the following elections:

- Sign up for a flexible account for health or dependent care under the Federal Flexible Spending Acct Program (FSAFEDS).
- Enroll or change an existing dental plan under the Federal Employees Dental program (FEDVIP).
- Enroll or change an existing vision plan under the Federal Employees Vision Program (FEDVIP).
- Enroll or change an existing enrollment in the health insurance plan under the Federal Employee Health Benefit (FEHB) program.

"Don't forget, the Benefits Health Fair is November 4th, 2010"

Hiring Reform Initiative—Supervisors and Managers

In case you have not heard, there are some major changes happening November 1st regarding competitive examining procedures under the President's Hiring Reform Initiative. Category Rating is coming to an HR office near you.

Category Rating will soon replace the "Rule of 3" which the Federal Government has been accustomed to using when looking to recruit from outside its workforce.

What does this mean to Supervisors/Managers? All Supervisors/Managers will be **required** to take a one hour training which is being developed thru DOI Learn. This training will be an introduction and overview of Category Rating. Supervisors/Managers will need to work closely with HR who will be able to provide further guidance.

The Department will be sending out policy regarding the implementation of Category Rating, so look for an IM to be disseminated shortly.

From the desk of Employee Relations

Did you know.....

As a new federal employee, you are required to serve a one-year probationary period. This is the final process in becoming a permanent employee.

You can compare it being a rookie on a football team, not everyone makes the team, but many will try out. You are trying out for your position in the federal government and until the probationary periods ends; you are considered applicants for an appointment to the federal service. You need to demonstrate why it is in the public interest for the government to finalize your appointment to the civil service. The burden is on the applicant to show why they should be converted.

As managers and supervisors it is up to you to provide the necessary tools to the probationary employee so they can be converted to a permanent position. The most important thing a supervisor needs to provide a new employee is "written expectations for a probationary employee." These expectations should be outlined in an individual development plan (IDP) that covers the entire probationary period. The IDP should have monthly milestones, and for the earliest period, weekly or even daily milestones. The employee should sign the IDP, indicating understanding and commitment.

The IDP should include:

- Developmental job assignments.
- Formal and informal training and coaching.

When it comes to evaluating progress against each milestone, the supervisor should be able to sit down with the employee and say "tell me" or "show me".

Another very important aspect of clarifying expectations is the explanation of the following work rules:

- Attendance (who to call and by what time)
- Dress Code (if applicable)
- Internal agency relations
- External Customer Service
- Coworker relations (including applicable EEO policies)
- Rules and Procedures governing pay, travel, reimbursements and schedule flexibilities.
- Ethics
- Security and confidentiality.
- Use of computers and other equipment
- Office rules/etiquette

These rules/expectations can be presented in a memo format. That way the employee can sign as received, indicating understanding and commitment.

Supervisors should make assessments at three, six and nine months. When these assessments reveal performance problems, it is best to adjust IDPs as needed, be clear and direct, let employees know they must improve by the next assessment or be terminated and above all, do not let the issues go beyond nine months.

Employees should be notified immediately of conduct issues and those employees should be terminated quickly if the matter is serious.

Supervisors can provide a warning notice even though they are not required. The notice should include details of performance or conduct issues, and an explanation of what was done to help the employee. This provides a document trail of what has occurred in case the decision to terminate is reached.

Sometimes if it is made clear to employees that they are not meeting expectations, they will often resign, and you will not need to terminate them.

Supervisors can turn probationary employees into top performers by coaching the employee, counsel about issues, and above all document.

The probationary period, if used correctly, can be one of the most reliable and valid assessment tools available to agencies when an individual is employed in his/her first Federal position.

If you have any questions to the above information, contact me at X5527.

For questions concerning Employee Relations, contact:

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Employee Relations Spec

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

HTTP://WWW.BLM.GOV/NIFC/ST/EN/PROG/FIRE/MORE/HUMAN_RESOURCES.HTML

EAP Consultants Inc.

EAP Consultants, Inc. has valuable information that can be found on their website.

HELPNET - Offers information, training, and resources for balancing work and family life, health and wellness, emotional well-being, and achieving work and personal goals. It also contains an Elder Care and Child Care locator for your area, featured articles on subjects such as: mental health, finances, health, legal and stress management.

To visit the EAP web site, go to http://www.eapconsultants.com/ in the right hand corner, click on Member Access, this will bring up a page that will ask you for our pass-word.

The password is nifc