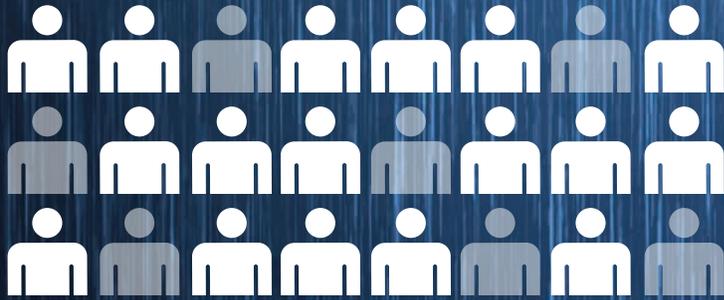


GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN



YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFIT FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES.



ARE THEY MAKING THE MOST OF IT?



Without your help, your employees could be underutilizing their benefits while also making decisions that drive up your costs. In this white paper, we look at strategies relating to how you and your employees can use your health insurance plan more effectively.

PART

1

UNDERUTILIZED HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS



Your current health insurance plan has some hidden gems of benefits. However, your employees will only use them if they know that they are available. Here are a few of the most valuable but most underutilized benefits in health insurance plans:



Telemedicine

Telemedicine is becoming more popular every year thanks to new advancements in technology. This benefit enables someone to receive medical care remotely, such as over the phone or via a videoconference.

If your insurance plan offers telemedicine, you could set up a small room in your workplace dedicated to it. If an employee feels ill, they can use this room to speak with a nurse or doctor and avoid having to travel all the way to the doctor's office. They can get advice right then and there about whether or not they should take a sick day.



A telehealth appointment is roughly \$100 less than an in-person doctor's appointment

Employees can also receive prescriptions remotely. This saves time and also money because the out-of-pocket cost for a telehealth appointment is roughly \$100 less than an in-person doctor's appointment, according to a study from the Alliance for Connected Care.¹



Nurse Lines

Your health insurance plan likely includes a nurse line as well. Employees can call the plan's hotline for free and speak with a trained nurse right away. These lines are typically 24/7, so employees can get advice and ask questions any time they need to.

Employees should be encouraged to call their nurse hotline for minor health problems before they go see their doctor. They will get advice more quickly, and may find out that they do not actually need to go to the doctor's office. This is especially helpful at night, when the regular doctor's office is closed and employees may think they have no choice but to go to the emergency room. By calling instead, they can avoid an unnecessary trip and save themselves — as well as your organization — a costly hospital visit.



24/7

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UNDERUTILIZED HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS



Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Your employees' mental health is just as important as their physical health. However, programs for mental health

care are not often discussed, so employees can feel like they do not have any support. Employee Assistance Programs fill this gap.

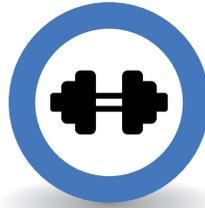
An EAP provides employees a resource where they can call trained counselors to

discuss issues like substance abuse, personal problems and work-related situations. Employees can talk with the counselor and, if needed, schedule an in-person appointment or be referred to mental healthcare specialists, like a rehab clinic.

An EAP keeps sensitive information confidential, so your employees can use this service without worrying about job ramifications. At the same time, you benefit by preventing issues that can increase turnover, lower productivity or lead to more expensive health problems. Because of these benefits, health insurance plans typically include an EAP for free.



An EAP keeps sensitive information confidential.



Wellness Incentives

Workplace wellness encourages your employees to be healthier. These incentives can range from fitness classes to a nutrition course to programs that help employees quit smoking. Workplace wellness is a “win” for everyone involved because your employees become healthier while you bring down your long-term health insurance costs.

Your health insurance company likely also encourages workplace wellness and may include some of these courses with your plan, or at least be able to refer you to good programs in your area.

One simple but effective incentive you should consider including is free or subsidized gym memberships for your employees. Even a \$20 monthly reimbursement off the cost of a gym membership has been shown to encourage people to exercise three times as often, according to the consulting firm Healthy Contributions.² This is a great step toward healthier, more productive employees.



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Mail Order Pharmacy

The advantages of mail order are convenience — often a 3 month supply of medication delivered to the employee's door — and peace of mind, knowing that your employees will get the medication they need. Additionally, mail order can help with medication adherence. A pharmacy plan is typically the most used benefit of all, so it's critical employers know about their options and encourage employees to take advantage.



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PART

2

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO INTEGRATE WITH YOUR PLAN



Once you have your health insurance plan up and running, consider integrating a few additional benefits. These offerings are part of a complete benefits package and will help with both recruitment and retention. Some of these benefits also make your employees healthier, which improves productivity and can lower healthcare expenses:



Dental

A dental plan is an extremely popular workplace benefit. As an employer, chances are you can provide much better coverage options to your employees than they could buy on their own. Group plans qualify for better rates than individual plans, making dental a very cost-effective benefit.

Good dental hygiene can improve productivity.

At the same time, good dental hygiene can improve productivity. It's definitely not easy for someone to concentrate when they have a painful cavity. By setting up dental coverage, you'll prevent these problems by giving employees the chance to have regular cleanings and checkups.



Vision

Many American adults wear some type of corrective lenses for vision, so it's likely that a substantial number of your workers wear glasses or contacts. These employees would probably appreciate a vision plan to cover their optometrist checkups as well as new lenses and glasses.

Even employees who don't currently need glasses can benefit from a vision plan because their eyesight might get worse as they get older. Additionally, regular visits to an optometrist can catch other health problems — like diabetes, hypertension and glaucoma — early, before they turn into more serious and more expensive issues.



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Life Insurance

Everyone needs life insurance — especially employees with children. By insuring your company as a group, your employees can receive lower prices on their coverage than they would with an individual policy. Also, group life insurance can get around some of the health underwriting requirements of individual policies, so employees who may not be able to buy life insurance on their own can do so through the company plan. That's a benefit they will not want to give up.



Everyone needs life insurance — especially employees with children.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO INTEGRATE WITH YOUR PLAN



Short-Term Disability

If your employees become seriously sick or injured, they have more than medical bills to worry about. They also have to figure out how to pay their daily expenses while they take time off from work to recover. A short-term disability plan would help replace their wages.

Short-term plans start paying out rather quickly, usually within a few days or weeks of filing a request. However, they do not keep paying benefits forever. They stop making payments within a few months or two years at the very most. This setup makes a short-term disability plan a more



Short-term plans start paying out rather quickly.

affordable benefit to offer compared to long-term disability.



Long-Term Disability

A long-term disability that lasts months or years is a huge financial burden — one that most people cannot handle. If you set up a long-term disability plan, you can give your employees a way to replace their wages for an issue that keeps them out of work for years or even their entire career.



Long-term plans offer extremely valuable coverage.

While long-term plans are more expensive, they offer extremely valuable coverage. Since this workplace benefit is not as common, it's a way for your organization to stand out and show your employees that you appreciate them and respect their well-being.

PART
3

INCREASE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



Once you've set up an effective benefits package, you need to engage your employees to make sure they are taking full advantage. Otherwise, you're spending money on benefits the workforce doesn't really appreciate or fully understand. Employee engagement is important throughout the entire year, not just when employees sign up. Here's a plan to follow for the entire year:



Starting a New Plan

A few weeks before the enrollment period for your new health insurance plan, hold a meeting with your employees and explain how the benefits will change. Point out whether there are new out-of-pocket expenses,



Your employees need to understand their benefits in order to choose the right plan during enrollment.

if there are new services or if some old benefits have been discontinued and whether the physician network has changed. Your health insurance company may be willing to send a representative to go over the basics of your new plan during your enrollment.

It's also important to explain why you decided to switch plans. Will the change lower out-of-pocket costs? Will employees receive a better network? Try to find some benefits to make employees feel happy about the change.

This is also a good time to review the basics of health insurance plans, like copayments, deductibles, coinsurance and networks like PPOs and HMOs. Most people are not health insurance experts, yet they need to understand these basics in order to choose the right plan during enrollment.



Mid-Year Reminders and Training

Most companies only talk about benefits during their enrollment and then don't bring them up until the next year. This causes businesses to miss an opportunity to teach employees how to use benefits more effectively.

For example, you could hold a mid-year training seminar to teach your staff how to properly use the telemedicine room while also pointing out the advantages, like lower expenses and saved time. Your HR department could also send out regular emails explaining other benefits, like your EAP or nurse line.

Without regular reminders, your employees will forget about these features. That's why they are underutilized in the first place.



Your HR department could also send out regular emails explaining benefits.

INCREASE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



Plan Renewal

At the end of the year, review the usage of your company benefits to see if some are being underutilized. For instance, if no one is participating in your short-term disability program, perhaps employees don't understand the benefit and subsequently haven't signed up. More training could get them moving. Evaluating your company plan's usage can give you this insight.

This is also a good time to survey your employees and ask what parts of their benefits package they like and what they don't rate highly. This feedback can help you redesign your health insurance plan — and other benefits — for the future.

Once again, hold an annual refresher on the key features of your health insurance plan and the insurance terminology that employees need to understand before open enrollment. People can forget a lot over the course of a year, so employees will appreciate this reminder.

You're putting in valuable time and money to set up a health insurance plan, so be sure your employees make the most of it. By following this advice, you'll teach your employees how to use their benefits more effectively while giving them a new appreciation for everything your company offers.



Teaching your employees how to use their benefits more effectively gives them a new appreciation for everything your company offers.

Sources

1. Yamamoto, Dale. "Assessment of the Feasibility and Cost of Replacing In-Person Care with Acute Care Telehealth Services." Alliance for Connected Care. December 2014.
2. Holliday, Heidi. "Employers Should Reimburse for Gym Memberships." The New York Times. 24 February 2014.