

PLEASE READ SECTIONS THAT APPLY TO YOU --- IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON WHEN YOU CAN RENEW OR CHANGE YOUR PLANS AS WELL AS IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS.

MEDICARE CLIENTS - - -

Annual enrollment is between October 15th and December 7th, as it is every year. In late September, you should be receiving an Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) from the Medicare Advantage plan or Prescription Drug Plan carriers. (Those of you that have a Medigap plan will not receive an ANOC since the plan design remains constant). The ANOC is a very important document. It will compare the plan design in the present year to the new plan design for the upcoming year. It will clearly outline the changes in premium, deductibles, copays, out of pocket expenses, etc. If you like the proposed changes, please call me to let me know you reviewed it, and it will automatically change to the new plan on January 1st. If you are not happy with the changes, please call my office to schedule an appointment to review other options within the same carrier or with another carrier. This appointment needs to be scheduled during the above time frame for the change to take place.

ACA CLIENTS - - -

Unfortunately, UPMC has decided to eliminate commissions for brokers for most of their plans, and to greatly reduce the other commissions. As a result, due to the potential liability and exposure, I will be unable to continue working with you. Please note the following below to ensure your 2018 plan design and coverage is what you would like it to be.

The open enrollment period for 2017 is between November 1st and December 15th. The new plan design will start on January 1st. Remember, these plans are all calendar year plans. You should receive a letter from your present health insurance carrier hopefully by early October. The letter will let you know if your present plan will be available next year, and if so, what the new premium and plan design will be.

Due to strict enrollment periods associated with this law, if you do not make a change by the end of the open enrollment period, you will not be able to make a change until the following year unless you have some type of qualifying life event, which needs to be documented in writing.

It is unclear what to expect in terms of rate increases for the upcoming year. While the insurance carriers have filed, they still have time to make changes in their rates, which most likely won't be released until early October. Also, since there is a question about Cost Sharing Reductions (CSR) subsidies possibly being discontinued, this could affect if insurers would continue to participate in the Federal Marketplace. I also heard, and am not sure if this is correct, that the insurance carriers may be submitting two sets of rates, one if there continues to be CSR's and one if the CSR's are eliminated. The CSR lowers out of pocket costs based on income for Silver plans bought on the Marketplace.

For those of you who signed up via the Federal Marketplace, remember every year you need to update your information, including financial information. You also need to be sure that you filed your 2016 tax return and reconciled your advanced premium tax credits (APTC). Please confirm with your accountant or financial advisor regarding this prior to open enrollment. I am unable to advise you on any matter regarding this as I am not a financial advisor.

NON-ACA CLIENTS - - -

This pertains to those of you who have kept previous health insurance plans through Highmark (Keystone HMO and Complete Care), and UPMC (Individual Advantage plans such as EPO Value 500, 1000, and HSA 1300). It is still unclear as to whether you will be able to keep these plans for the upcoming year. You should be receiving a notice directly from the carriers. If you can keep your plan, it should have the renewal increase as well. If the plan is not available, or if you want to make a change, you would want to do that between November 1st and December 15th for the change to take place January 1, 2018. If you don't make a change within the open enrollment period, you will not be able to for 2018 unless you have a qualifying event, such as move to a new geographic area, marriage, loss of job based coverage, etc.

EMPLOYER GROUP CLIENTS - - -

Some of you have already renewed during this year, but many of you will be renewing on December 1, 2017, and January 1, 2018. Most of the December renewals have already been released. For those of you who have a non-ACA, medically underwritten plan, you will be receiving 2 renewals, one for the non-ACA as well as one for the ACA.

As soon as I receive your renewal information I will let you know. You will be receiving a package directly from the insurance carriers two months prior to the renewal date.

IMPORTANT INFO FOR ALL GROUPS, which was already shared last year - - -

**Full time employee is considered 30 hours
Waiting period for health insurance
coverage to start cannot exceed a total of 90 days,
which means if you offer the 1st of the month, the
longest time is the 1st of the month following 60
days.**

RECENT WORKSHOP - - -

The Medicare Educational Seminar was held on Wednesday September 13th. I was fortunate to have Elaine Cole, Public Affairs Specialist for Social Security Administration, review Original Medicare – including eligibility, application process, different parts of Medicare, late enrollment penalties

and income related monthly adjustments. This was a very informative session. She also shared some information on Social Security Benefits. Hopefully, I will be able to offer this workshop, with Elaine as our guest speaker, on an annual basis.

The Affordable Care Act Seminar that I was originally hoping to have will unfortunately not happen this year. This is due mostly to the fact that I will not have access to any of the ACA changes and information until right before the open enrollment period starts. I don't expect things to change too much; however, it is hard to know.

As you all know, there are still a lot of unknowns and a lot of moving pieces that have to be figured out. Insurers will have to decide if they want to continue participating in the Federal Marketplace, especially if the cost sharing reductions (CSR's) are eliminated.

Visit my updated website at
www.bluepeakinsurance.com



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