



The Benefits Group, Inc.

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



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Your Healthcare Benefit Source

SustiNet Bill and Health Care Reform, and New Laws Affecting Connecticut

Our agents have attended several seminars to educate ourselves about the new laws in CT and the SustiNet plan that was voted in on June 19, 2009. While some of this may seem confusing or even scary at first, please keep in mind that there are lot of details that need to be ironed out over the next couple of years. The intent is to have everyone in the State of CT covered by health insurance, one way or another.



Per the State of CT website (www.cga.ct.gov/2009/BA/2009HB-06600-R000615-BA.htm) here is a summary of the plan:

This bill establishes the "SustiNet Plan," a new state health care program intended to extend insurance coverage to the state's uninsured. Among its many provisions, the bill:

1. creates a large insurance pool that includes recipients of Medicaid and HUSKY, state employees and retirees, families without health insurance from an employer, and individuals having difficulty affording high-cost insurance on the job;
2. digitizes medical records linked to a central database that physicians and other providers must use as a condition of participation in SustiNet;
3. creates "medical homes" that offer patients round-the-clock central coordination of their health care as well as guidance in managing it;
4. relies on periodic quality review of providers and evidence-based medicine; and
5. provides for public health campaigns in support of such measures as health screenings and immunizations.

The bill establishes the "SustiNet" Authority operated by a nine member board of directors composed of health care consumers, employers, health care experts, providers, labor, and business. The authority's purpose is to develop and implement the SustiNet Plan, a self-insured health care delivery plan operated by a public-private partnership designed to ensure that plan enrollees receive high quality health care coverage without unnecessary costs.

The bill also creates task forces addressing obesity, tobacco usage, and the health care workforce.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2009, except that the sections on identifying uninsured children (§ 19) and eligibility determination (§ 20) take effect July 1, 2011, and the three task forces established (§§ 27-29) take effect upon passage.

We'll be seeing a lot more of the SustiNet Plan in the news over the next year. We will report information as it becomes available and impacts you and your business.

Please circulate this newsletter to:

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

ARRA COBRA Subsidized Benefits may soon end...

For employers that had to lay off employees last year that were eligible for the ARRA COBRA subsidy effective March 1, 2009 and received the 35% subsidized rate, please note that the subsidy ends on 11/30/09 (after 9 months coverage). For those laid off after 3/1/09, the subsidy lasts for 9 months after their COBRA effective date.



Former employees may continue COBRA for an additional 9 months (18 months total), but will be charged the full 100% (+ 2% administrative fee).

If you administer COBRA, please take note of the subsidy expiration date for laid off employees to make sure you collect the proper premiums. You may want to notify the employees at least a month prior to the subsidy end date of the rate adjustment.

If the former employees feel they cannot afford the COBRA premiums, please ask them to call us to discuss with them the option of individual insurance.

New State of CT Mandate Effective 10/1/09



Under House Bill 5669, employers may elect to terminate an employee's coverage under a group health insurance policy, upon termination of employment, under certain conditions:

- ◇ employee voluntarily terminates, or
- ◇ employer terminates an employee for reasons other than layoff.

If the employer elects to request a refund/credit for the employee's prepaid premium, it must be done so within 72 hours of termination. If the request is not made within 72 hours, the refund/credit will not be honored and coverage will terminate at the end of the month. This legislation does not apply to contractual agreements with collective bargaining units; these agreements supersede the bill.

Please contact your carrier's billing department for more information or to terminate an employee.

Are you adequately insured in all areas of your life?

Consumers typically review their homeowners and car insurance coverage annually since they are required coverages. However, many people do not conduct the same annual review for their own personal coverage. Have you checked you life insurance lately? Do you have enough to take care of your family or business in the event of your premature death? Do you have enough disability insurance to cover you in the case of a disability?

Reports indicate that consumer buying trends during a recession show increased spending in personal insurance and pensions. Increased spending of 'food at home' (as opposed to eating out) is what followed the insurance and pensions category. Consumers are clearly reprioritizing.

Even college finance textbooks indicate that having adequate insurance protection including life, disability, homeowners, renters and auto insurance is in top 5 of taking personal financial responsibility.

Obviously, in a day and age when money can be tight, people are not looking for ways to spend money. However, the more important question you can ask yourself is, "Can I afford to be without these basic coverages? What happens if I become disabled or die prematurely?" If you think you can't afford them, then you probably can't afford to be without them. If you need help with a review of your current benefits, please contact your agent.



LAST CHANCE...

For CBIA life insurance members to apply for a supplemental life benefit

If you currently offer life insurance through CBIA, you should have received an invitation for employees to apply for a supplemental life insurance benefit without requiring evidence of insurability. This offer expires October 15th.

This is a great opportunity for employees to purchase additional life insurance at group rates who may not qualify on their own. The rates are based on their age and the amount chosen.

If your employees are interested, please have them complete an application and submit it by the deadline, otherwise they will be considered a late entrant and subject to underwriting.



The Benefits Group will be closed on November 26 & 27 in observance of Thanksgiving.

Medicare Part D and Medicare Part C Advantage Plans Open Enrollment

Employees who are enrolled in the Medicare D Prescription Drug Program and Medicare Part C Advantage plans can make changes to their plan during the open enrollment from November 15th through December 31, 2009.



Those that are newly eligible for Medicare can enroll in a Part C or Part D plan during a seven month enrollment period: during the birth month, three months before the birth month and three months after the birth month.

Also, please remember to distribute credibility letters to your employees by November 15, 2009.

Claims or benefit questions?

When employees have claim or benefit questions, please encourage them to call the customer service number on their ID cards. It's the best place to start to get answers; the representatives have access to all of the contractual language and can answer any follow up questions easily. Most times, the questions can be answered quickly and to their satisfaction. If the employees find they cannot resolve their issue, please have them call us.



End of the Year Housekeeping—Calendar Year Benefits

If you have an FSA (**flexible spending account**), remember, use it or lose it! Here are some items that qualify as FSA expenses: diabetic monitor, sunscreen, cough syrup, Lamaze classes, medical records charges, over the counter medicines and smoking cessation programs. Buy a new pair of prescription sunglasses or stock up on approved medical supplies. Take advantage of any unused FSA funds before December 31, 2009.



Don't forget to make the most of your **dental benefits**, too! For most plans, January traditionally begins the new plan year deductibles and maximums. Schedule your dental visits before the end of the year to take advantage of deductibles that have already been met, or use up the maximum benefits before the new year.

New 2010 HSA Limits

HSA holders can choose to save up to \$3,050 for an individual and \$6,150 for a family (HSA holders 55 and older get to save an extra \$1,000 which means \$4,050 for an individual and \$7,150 for a family).