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And the Survey Says...

Recently, Lifetime Benefit Solutions conducted a survey about compliance and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Among its major findings:



Compliance and Preparedness:

- Overall, employers expressed a fairly high level of confidence regarding their compliance or level of preparation relative to compliance with all current and upcoming regulations and reporting requirements.
- There was dissonance between employer and broker perceptions regarding preparedness. Only one-third of brokers somewhat agreed that employers were prepared for new reporting disclosure and notification requirements that take effect this year while nearly half somewhat or strongly disagreed.
- The dissonance between employers and brokers is interesting to note considering that 80% of employers indicated that they relied on their broker to stay informed about compliance and reporting requirements.
- Employers were most confident regarding COBRA, written plan document/summary plan description for health FSA and medical, Form 5500 and 1094/1095.
- Employers were least confident regarding employer comparable contribution rules under 4980G for HSAs and the provisions of

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Product Highlight: HSA



A Health Savings Account (HSA) solution from Lifetime Benefit Solutions can give your employees more spending money per paycheck while they save money on out-of-pocket health care expenses.

An HSA is a tax-advantaged savings account used in combination with a qualified high deductible health plan (HDHP) to give your employees a new way to manage health care costs. They can use the HSA funds to cover qualified health care expenses - from co-payments at the doctor's office to pharmacy bills, dental care, vision care and more.

Learn more at:

www.lifetimebenefitsolutions.com/employers/hsa.



And the Survey Says continued from first page...

the “Cadillac Tax” the part of the ACA which taxes high-cost health plans.

Influence Over Benefit Plan Costs and Employee Engagement:

- Employers responses were divided regarding whether they felt their company had influence in controlling medical plan expenses. 46 percent strongly or somewhat agreed that they had control while 30 percent strongly or somewhat disagreed. The remaining 22 percent were neutral.
- Responses here are likely influenced by benefit plan design. With fully insured plans, premium rates are set at the beginning of each plan year so employers have a good idea of total annual costs and can budget accordingly. While this provides short-term financial certainty, it doesn’t provide the ability to understand utilization, improve employee health and reduce overall costs that is possible through self-funded plan design.

Employees Understanding of Benefit Plans:

- Seventy percent of employers agreed or strongly agreed that their employees understand the company’s benefit plans.
- This stands in contrast with recent employee survey data from MetLife that indicates 54% of employees claim they need more help understanding how their benefits work, and how those benefits can help meet their needs.
- Senior HR and C-level executives may not be sufficiently involved in the employee communications process to accurately assess the level of employee understanding.

Sharing Information with Employees About Benefit Plans:

- Eighty-six percent of employers believe that their company does a good job sharing information with them about their benefits plan. This contrasts with survey data from MetLife that shows fewer than half of employees strongly agree that their companies’ benefit communications helped them to understand how they would pay for specific services and effectively educated them on their benefit options.

MDLIVE

Product Highlight: Telemedicine

MDLIVE treats routine medical conditions by connecting patients to doctors 24/7/365, saving valuable time and offering unparalleled convenience. While the typical doctor’s visit - from scheduling to prescription pick-up - takes an estimated four hours, an MDLIVE doctor’s visit takes approximately 16 minutes. There’s considerable peace of mind in knowing that doctors are available to see them anytime, anywhere. And MDLIVE patients can choose the most convenient way to connect - either by phone, secure video or through the MDLIVE App.



Benefits to employers:

- Helps decrease absenteeism and improve productivity
- Offers employees an easy to use and convenient way to get high quality care when and how they want it
- Provides a valued benefit that supports employee satisfaction and retention

Contact your account representative to learn more.

The Flu vs. The Vaccine: Nice Try, Flu...

The flu season is underway. But not to worry. This year, according to a review of tracking data by Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, there is strong evidence that this year's flu vaccine effectively targets the strain that is currently sweeping the state. "If you could play the lottery and know many of the winning numbers in advance, wouldn't you go out of your way to get a ticket?" asked Matthew Bartels, M.D., Excellus BCBS chief medical officer for health care improvement.



"Makers of the flu vaccine use global tracking and predictive reasoning to choose targeted strains for public consumption," he explained. "Our early look at New York State Department of Health data indicates that this year's vaccine protects against the right strains."

Excellus BCBS will share its early findings with community physicians and pharmacists who administer the vaccine so they can promote it to their patients six-months-old and older, and encourage the public to get their flu shots now.

"Traditionally, fewer than half of upstate New York adults receive an annual flu vaccine," said Bartels. "The health of our community hinges on increasing that percentage, especially this year, when the flu vaccine appears to be so effective."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the annual flu vaccine is designed to protect against three or four flu strains during a season that typically stretches from October to May. Different flu strains can circulate at different times.

"While it's never too late in the season to get the flu vaccine, the earlier you get it, the better, because it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide protection," said Bartels.

Statistics indicate that every 100 people who get the flu are likely to pass it on to 127 more people, according to Bartels. He notes that people with the flu are contagious beginning one day before they show symptoms, and remain so up to a week after becoming sick. Someone who has the flu can infect people as far as six feet away.

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ACA Update: Opposing Employer Health Taxes

The Self-Insurance
Institute of
America (SIIA)



recently urged policymakers to oppose additional efforts to create other tax burdens upon the employer-based health care system. This action is part of a larger advocacy campaign to strengthen and protect the availability of employer sponsored health benefits.



To offset costs, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) included a 40% excise tax on certain health benefits. Within a matter of years this burdensome excise tax, commonly referred to as the 'Cadillac Tax', is expected to hit the vast majority of employees and employers unless Congress takes action. In addition, the imposition of such an excise tax would impose a costly administrative burden on self-insured employers and TPAs.

While SIIA participated in coalition activities last year that successfully sought a moratorium on the implementation of the Cadillac Tax until 2020, the clear advocacy goal has been to eliminate the tax altogether to ensure the continued ability of employers to self-insure.

Read the full story [here](#).

The Flu vs. The Vaccine continued from page 3...

The number of confirmed cases of the flu in New York state (913 cases as of December 3, 2016), outpaces the number of cases reported at that point a year earlier (393 cases as of December 5, 2015). Last year, doctors began seeing a trickle of patients during the first week of October. A modest spike in cases occurred in early November. The line on the tracking graph rose precipitously during the first week in December, according to Bartels. Each week, more flu cases are reported.

Of 913 confirmed flu cases in New York state so far, 397 resulted in hospitalizations. From October to May 2015, there were 49,000 confirmed cases of the flu and 9,000 flu-related hospitalizations in New York state. One in nine children who got the flu were hospitalized, and one in two adults older than 65 who got the flu was admitted to the hospital.

For more information on the flu, download a free Excellus BCBS infographic at tinyurl.com/jncy8sw.



uberPOOL? uber cool!

Happening now: WEX Health payment cards are an approved payment form for uberPOOL. uberPOOL enables commuters to save money by riding uberPOOL on their pre-tax dollars, matching people going to the same place at the same time through the sharing an eligible van pool vehicle (six or more seats).

In addition, uberPOOL has been added as a valid terminal for transit purchases. Any WEX Health payment card that has a transit purse loaded with the terminal ID solution can be configured to use uberPOOL. Commuters can now add their commuter benefits of debit card to their Uber account.



When requesting an uberPOOL with a WEX Health commuter benefit card as payment method, Uber will automatically match the commuter with eligible vehicles.

Regulatory update:

IRS-Captive Insurance Update: Reporting Requirement Delayed

The IRS issued a revised Notice 2017-08 on December 29th, extending the original filing deadline by 90 days, from January 30, 2017 to May 1, 2017. The extension is due to a formal request sent by the Self-Insurance Institute of America (SIIA) to the IRS, Treasury and Congress asking for modifications and a reporting extension.



DELAYED



In the request, SIIA commented that the original timeline for compliance was short and that the requirements set forth in the Notice are too broad, resulting in little useful new information versus the tremendous cost of compliance to the taxpayers and loss of revenue to states.

You can read more about the delay [here](#).