



Benefits Administration Letter

Number: 06-204

Date: July 18, 2006

Subject: **Flexibilities in Employee Benefit Programs, including the FEHB, FLTCIP, FSAFEDS and FEGLI Programs**

Purpose

On May 9, 2006, President George W. Bush announced the [Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza](#). While there is no evidence or indication at this time it will adversely impact the Federal community or the U.S. populace at large, it is important to be prepared for any eventuality. Since our paramount concern is the health and security of Federal employees, we are providing you with a brief update on employee benefits programs. You will hear more from us in the near future on preparations for a possible pandemic.

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB)

FEHB carriers are asked to demonstrate maximum flexibility under their OPM contract, including the following:

- We expect fee-for-service carriers to relax certain provisions such as their pre-certification requirement the plan must be notified within two business days of an emergency admission.
- We expect fee-for-service carriers and HMOs to relax requirements about notification and levels of benefit payment if victims are taken to non-plan and/or non-PPO hospitals or other treatment centers.
- We expect all carriers to make certain FEHB members get additional supplies of medications as backup for emergency situations if necessary.

Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP)

Those enrolled in FLTCIP should contact Long Term Care Partners at **1-800-582-3337** if they have any questions about how a crisis may affect their coverage, eligibility for benefits, or payment of premiums.

Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS)

We do not see a need for special procedures for the FSAFEDS program at this time. However with the potential for a significantly increased number of claims in the event of a pandemic, we

anticipate there may be a coinciding increase in the time it takes for claims to be processed and reimbursements to be received. FSAFEDS will make every effort to communicate with employees about any possible delays. Agencies should contact fsa@opm.gov if there are any issues with FSAFEDS allotments or claims causing a hardship on employees and their families.

Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI)

The FEGLI Program has had experience with disaster situations, and if and when necessary, will apply expedited procedures used successfully in the past. In the event of a pandemic, an alert will be sent to agencies, giving details of expedited procedures (such as payment of applicable life insurance benefits without a death certificate).

We hope the need for these flexibilities never arises. But we believe it is important for agencies and employees to know they are available. Thank you, in advance, for your help and cooperation.

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for Human Resources Products and Services