



Benefits Administration Letter

Number: 07-401

Date: 8-21-07

Subject: 2007 Federal Benefits Open Season: What's New

Welcome to the first in a series of 2007 Open Season Benefits Administration Letters (BAL).

Beginning this year, we are changing the focus and name of the annual Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program Open Season to the more inclusive Federal Benefits Open Season. Because of the recent addition of two benefit programs, Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) and Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), Open Season isn't just for FEHB anymore. Employees need to make decisions during Open Season not only on FEHB but also on FEDVIP and FSAFEDS, with an understanding of the relationships between and among the three programs.

Our Open Season BALs will now include information on all three benefit programs that participate in the annual Federal Benefits Open Season. We no longer will issue separate program-specific BALs on Open Season. We believe these changes will better help you in conducting another successful Open Season.

FSAFEDS

The Federal Flexible Spending Account Program, known as FSAFEDS, is available to most employees in the Executive branch and employees of other agencies that have adopted the program. FSAFEDS can help employees save money by allowing them to set aside pre-tax funds to pay for eligible out-of-pocket dependent-care and health-care expenses. The Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) reimburses non-medical expenses associated with the care of children under age 13, or dependents who are unable to care for themselves. It does not reimburse dependent health-care expenses. The Health Care Flexible Spending Account (HCFSA) covers eligible health-care expenses for the employee and his/her spouse and eligible dependents. Employees covered by a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a Health Savings Account (HSA) may enroll in a Limited Expense HCFSA (LEX HCFSA) for their eligible dental and vision expenses.

FEDVIP

The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program provides comprehensive dental and vision insurance. This Program allows dental and vision insurance to be purchased on a group basis, which means competitive premiums and no pre-existing condition limitations.

FEDVIP is group coverage on an enrollee pay all basis and is available to Federal employees, retirees, and their eligible family members. There are seven (7) dental and three (3) vision preferred provider organization (PPO) plans from which to choose, including regional, national and international coverage.

FEHB

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program offers a wide variety of types of plans and options of coverage to help meet enrollee's health care needs. Eligible enrollees can choose from among fee-for-service plans, health maintenance organizations, point-of-service products, high-deductible, and consumer-driven health plans. The FEHB is group coverage, and includes employees, retirees, and their dependents.

WEB SITE

You can find more information about these programs at www.opm.gov/insure. OPM will post FEDVIP and FEHB premiums for 2008 in mid-September. You will be able to find specific Federal Benefits Open Season information on our web site during the first week of November.

DATES

The 2007 Federal Benefits Open Season will be held from Monday, November 12, 2007, through Monday, December 10, 2007.

BALs

Through the BENEFITSINFO Listserv, you will receive the following BALs in the upcoming months:

1. Federal Benefits Open Season: 2007 Rider Information - provides guidance on ordering the renamed Guide to Federal Benefits (formerly the Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans);
2. 2007 Federal Benefits Open Season: Ordering and Distribution of Materials – provides a list of carrier contacts for ordering plan brochures, and distributing Open Season materials;
3. 2007 Federal Benefits Open Season: Conducting the Open Season – provides information on counseling employees, annuitant inquiries, carrier contacts, Open Season actions, effective dates, and agency actions; and
4. 2007 Federal Benefits Open Season: Significant Events – provides tables of significant events affecting certain plans.

As in the past, the 400 series will be dedicated to the Open Season. You can find these BALs at www.opm.gov/asd/htm/bal-1.asp.

GUIDE TO FEDERAL BENEFITS (formerly Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans)

FEDVIP, FSAFEDS and FEHB, plus their impact on each other, have given enrollees more to consider when making benefit decisions. This year, we have revised the Guide to include information about these three benefit programs, plus brief information about two other benefit programs that do not participate in the annual Federal Benefits Open Season – the Federal Employees’ Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program and the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP). The revised Guide explains the relationship between the Programs, provides guidance on making enrollment decisions and instructs employees on what they need to do, if anything, during Open Season. As in the past, agencies may purchase Guides through a Government Printing Office (GPO) print rider. You can find information about purchasing the Guides in the upcoming BAL Federal Benefits Open Season: 2007 Rider Information.

CONTACTING US

Our Internet email boxes allow us to answer agencies’ open season questions quickly and efficiently. If you have a question about an Open Season BAL, or any other questions about the Federal Benefits Open Season, please email your question to the following email addresses:

FSAFEDS Program: fsa@opm.gov
FEDVIP: fedvip@opm.gov
FEHB Program: fehb@opm.gov.

Sincerely,

Howard C. Weizmann
Deputy Director