
FEHB Program Carrier Letter

All Carriers

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Insurance Programs

Letter No. 1999-01

Date: January 15, 1999

Fee-for-service [1] Experience-rated HMO [1] Community-rated [1]

SUBJECT: FEHB Plain Language Initiative

In accordance with the Vice President's directive to produce federal documents using plain language, we are beginning a project to rewrite federal plan benefit brochures for contract year 2000 in plain language.

It is our intention to have an outside consultant assist us in creating plain language guidelines that we can apply to the documents and correspondence we produce. We will use these guidelines when we reformat and rewrite plan benefit brochures. Our goal for contract year 2000 is to rewrite the mandatory, across-the-board language found in all HMO brochures, such as the sections describing Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) and the disputed claims process. When these sections are identical in both the HMO and the fee-for-service brochures they will be modified for both types of brochures. We also hope to apply the guidelines to HMO benefit sections for all new benefits for year 2000.

We will be working closely with industry representatives in developing the guidelines and rewritten sections of the brochures. Our work group will consist of two health plan representatives representing the American Association of Health Plans (AAHP), a health plan employee representing the American Federation of Health Organizations (AFHO), a representative from the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan, a representative from OPM's Office of General Counsel, and OIP staff. We will also include a representative from Metropolitan Life, the contractor for the Federal Employees Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program. The first meeting of the workgroup is tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 5th.

We are interested in adding two health plan representatives whose company is not a member of either AAHP or AFHO. If you are interested in participating and your company is not represented by AAHP or AFHO, please contact either Mike Hodges or Ron Rabbu at (202)-606-0745 by January 22nd, 1999.

Please note that this is a hands-on work group. Although conference calls and electronic communication are possible, the nature of the task requires face to face meetings that will be held at OPM.

Please also note that candidates for the work group should have a broad working knowledge of the FEHB Program and the customer service issues involved when discussing FEHB plan brochures.

We look forward to our collaborative effort in making the contract year 2000 plan brochures the most concise, customer-friendly documents ever.

Sincerely,

(Signed)
Frank D. Titus
Assistant Director
for Insurance Programs