How Employers Are Reducing Employee Benefits Costs

Overall, we are seeing companies increase copays, deductibles, and out-of-pocket maximums, just as in previous years. Some companies are entertaining the idea of adding HSA or HRA plans, but largely employers are making the same decisions they have made for years: asking employees to pay more when they go to the doctor. For the most part, we are not seeing employers lowering their percentage of contribution. Within the next year or two I believe HRA plans will be seen as a better solution. Employers can easily save 10% by moving to a high-deductible HRA or HSA plan, but this leaves the employee with significant out-of-pocket costs. Therefore we are not seeing this trend that has been predicted over the last several years. Many employers are finding other ways to cut costs so that employee benefits are not affected quite as much.

- Go out to bid to find more competitive insurance programs.
- Offer a Wellness Program.
- Create and promote a health-conscious employee environment that would work to have a longer-term effect on health—and claims.
- Offer an HRA or HSA high-deductible plan with no employer contribution. Benefit to the employee: a lower monthly premium.
- Lower employer premium contributions towards the cost of employees and families.
- Eliminate employer dental plan contribution for family members.
- Eliminate or at least reevaluate the company paid vision plan.
- Reduce the amount of company-paid life insurance and offer voluntary life insurance.
- Reduce or eliminate the amount of company-paid disability insurance and offer a partially voluntary plan.
- Eliminate the short-term disability plan.
- Change benefit eligibility criteria from 30 to 40 hours per week.
- Establish a benefits budget, and have a committee work together to determine the best way to spend the money.

One cautionary note: making multiple changes in one year to any benefits plan can be disruptive to employees and leave them feeling that they are in a losing position. We typically recommend a strategy over several years.

You can also certainly see that the changes you make will impact employee’s paychecks by having them pay more for benefits; this all must be weighed carefully with any other internal changes.

Slip ‘n Fall

It goes without saying that walking conditions around a ski area can be slick or icy. Yet slip n’ fall injuries account for a very large number of employee and guest injuries. Continue to cover this topic in safety meetings!

Walking in slippery conditions can be safer if you:

- Use appropriate footwear.
- Slow down. Rushing or running increases your chance of slipping.
- Take shorter steps. Longer steps can make you more likely to lose your footing.
- Shuffle your feet in icy conditions. This helps force shorter steps and keeps both feet available to catch you if you start to slip.
- Look both ways before crossing streets and driveways. Remember, if you are having trouble with slippery conditions, then so are the vehicles—and they may not be able to stop quickly.

It is not possible to shovel and sand every inch of sidewalks, parking lots, and streets. If there’s a trouble spot, let your snow removal department know!

Stay safe so you can enjoy the season!