



Health Plan Update

A Publication of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia

December 1, 2006 Volume 7, No. 2

Hurry! Open Enrollment is Almost Over!

If you wish to make any changes in the employee benefits you and your family will receive from the University System of Georgia (USG) for 2007, you'd best hurry – the deadline for turning in the required open-enrollment forms is Dec. 15. After this date, your benefits will be locked in until 2008, unless certain changes take place in your circumstances.

The forms you will need to make the desired changes are available from your Human Resources Office, as well as online at www.usg.edu/employment/benefits/.

Remember, although no action is required if you do not wish to change your health-care coverage for 2007, you must submit a form each year electing to participate in one or both of the University System of Georgia's Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs).

Flexible Spending Accounts Help Stretch Your Health-Care Dollars

Health-Care and Dependent-Care Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) are among the most valuable components of your employee benefits package. With an FSA, you can reduce your taxes while paying for items and services that you'd purchase anyway.

A Flexible Spending Account (FSA) allows you to set aside a predetermined dollar amount in an account to cover eligible out-of-pocket health-care and dependent day-care expenses throughout the plan year. This money is deducted from your salary in equal increments all year long. You withdraw funds from the FSA as needed to reimburse yourself for your eligible expenditures. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allows employees to contribute to FSAs through payroll deductions before taxes and Social Security contributions are deducted from their pay. These dollars are actually worth more than most because they're tax free – as a participant in the FSA plan, employees pay no taxes on either contributions or withdrawals.

The University System of Georgia's FSAs are managed by Strategic Health and Productivity Solutions (SHPS), which enables account holders to track FSA balances and the status of claims 24/7 through www.myshps.com. SHPS also can be reached by calling 1-800-678-6684. Contact your Human Resources Office for a 2007 FSA election form.

Health-Care Flexible Spending Account: In addition to reimbursement for the portions of doctor, lab and pharmacy bills not covered by a participant's health plan, a Health-Care Flexible Spending Account can be used to help cover the cost of birth control, chiropractic care, prescription eyeglasses and contact lenses, psychotherapy, dental care, orthodontia (including braces), laser eye surgery and fertility treatments. Over-the-counter cold, flu and allergy remedies, as well as pain relievers, contact-lens supplies, eye drops, nasal

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sprays and smoking-cessation aids, also are reimbursable. These are just examples – for the complete list of FSA-eligible expenses, go to www.myshps.com

Eligible healthcare expenses generally include amounts paid for the diagnosis, care, mitigation, treatment or prevention of disease or illness and for treatments affecting any part or function of the body. Any expense recommended for the bettering of an individual's general health or well being is **not** eligible (i.e., vitamins or membership in a fitness club).

Your total FSA reimbursements for health-care expenses cannot exceed: \$5,000 per year if single or married and filing joint tax returns; or \$2,500 per year if married and filing separate returns.

Dependent-Care Flexible Spending Account: Employees may be reimbursed for most work-related expenses incurred for the care of a qualifying dependent through a Dependent-Care Spending Account. Expenses must be for the well-being and protection of a dependent while you and your spouse, if married, work or look for employment. If married, both you and your spouse must work unless your spouse is looking for work, is a full-time student or is disabled. Unpaid volunteer or volunteer work for a nominal salary does not qualify as employment. Children must be under the age of 13 unless physically or mentally unable to care for themselves. A spouse claimed as a dependent must be physically or mentally unable to care for him- or herself.

Your total reimbursements for dependent care cannot exceed: \$5,000 per year if single or married and filing joint tax returns; \$2,500 per year if married and filing separate returns; or the amount of your or your spouse's annual salary if earning less than \$5,000 (single taxpayers or married taxpayers filing joint tax returns) or \$2,500 (for married taxpayers filing separate tax returns). The \$5,000 limit is not affected by the number of qualified persons an individual can claim as a dependent.

Examples of eligible expenses include after-school programs, day care, nursery schools, day camps, elder-care facilities, care provided by a relative, private sitter or an au pair, and lodging and meals provided for the caregiver. For the complete list of FSA-eligible expenses, go to www.myshps.com 