

**HIPAA Deadlines****10 Health Promotion Programming Ideas****Lower Prescription Drug Costs Without Decreasing Coverage****2008 Benefit Trends****HIPAA Deadlines****HIPAA Nondiscrimination and Wellness Program Regulations**

The final **HIPAA Nondiscrimination and Wellness Program Regulations** were issued in December 2006. The final regulations include guidance on HIPAA's prohibition on discriminating with respect to health factors and provide conditions that certain wellness programs must satisfy to comply with the nondiscrimination rules. The regulations became effective for health plans renewing on or after July 1, 2007. Thus, **calendar-year health plans** should be aware that the final regulations take effect with respect to them on **January 1, 2008**. Non-calendar-year health plans with plan years beginning on or after February 1 will have to comply beginning on the first day of the next plan year.

HIPAA Privacy Regulations – Notice of Privacy Practices

The **HIPAA Privacy Regulations** require health plans to provide a **Notice of Privacy Practices** to all enrollees, or to remind them of its availability and how to obtain a copy, every three years. Health plans may satisfy this requirement by sending a Notice of Privacy Practices or reminder to all participants or by publishing the information in a newsletter or other plan publication. The notice should be updated to incorporate any material changes in a health plan's privacy policies or procedures.

Health plans that previously sent a notice by April 14, 2006 have until **April 14, 2009** to send a new notice. Small health plans, which were required to send a notice by April 14, 2007, have until **April 14, 2010** to send the next notice.

10 Health Promotion Programming Ideas

According to the Wellness Councils of America, the following 10 health promotion programming ideas can make a big difference for any company.

1. Get Management on Board. Find a talented and educated presenter on workplace wellness and ask him/her to present to management on the benefits and specific steps required to start a wellness program. When upper management understands the concept of health promotion programming, they are more likely to support the program.

2. Appoint a Wellness Leader and Provide Training. Without a leader, there will be nobody to coordinate the program details. Designate an existing employee who has a passion for wellness and send him/her to a conference or other training experience.

3. Conduct an Employee Health Interest Survey.

Such a survey will help obtain buy-in across the board and provide your company feedback on what specific health-related programs your employees are interested in.

4. Health Screening. Provide an opportunity for annual health screenings (blood pressure, cholesterol, BMI etc.) for employees, so they can understand their health status.

5. Annual Physical Activity Campaign. People who are physically active delay the onset of disability by ten years. For little or no cost, you can get your employees up and moving with a physical activity campaign.

6. Hold a Healthy Eating Seminar. These types of seminars are informative and fun. Consider bringing in a chef to cook a healthy meal that tastes good and is nutritionally sound. Or consider providing employees with healthy recipes.

7. Create a Wellness Library. Provide employees with the opportunity to learn more about prevention. Include self-care books, health magazines, instructional DVDs, audio books, and newsletters.

8. Health Newsletter. Regular health information will help employees become healthier.

9. Support Healthy Policies and Procedures.

Incorporate healthy policies and procedures (tobacco-free workplace, alcohol/drug-free environment, healthy vending choices etc.) into your business operations.

10. Promote Community Health Efforts. There are numerous events like runs, health fairs, and educational seminars that can be promoted and communicated to your employees.

Source: WELCOA

Lower Prescription Drug Costs Without Decreasing Coverage

Health care costs rose by more than twice the rate of inflation last year. The following are two ways you can reduce your prescription drug costs without dropping coverage levels or significantly increasing employee contributions.

- 1. Carve out your prescription benefit.** Consider using a pharmacy benefit management company to manage the pharmaceutical component of your health plan instead of packaging it with the medical side your PPO or HMO offers. Volume discounts and formulary design are the biggest advantages of prescription carve-out. Small companies on a self-insured PPO/HMO may not control the design of their plan, which may result in covering drugs that are normally not covered nationally. Having control offers more options. The use of generic drugs can be increased by formulary design through carve-out.
- 2. Force mail – order Rx.** If you have mail order in place and want to drive up generic usage, force individuals to use mail-order after they have made two trips to the pharmacy. If you decide to go this route, make sure your employees know and understand and provide extra reminders to employees.

Source: Workforce Management

2008 Benefit Trends

Most companies are looking to lower their rising healthcare costs and improve their employees' overall health. In doing so, there are various options companies can utilize. According to Watson Wyatt Worldwide, a global consulting firm, there are many new trends in benefits for 2008 that aim to lessen the financial burden on employers.

- **Rewards For Good Health** - Offer financial incentives to employees who have healthy habits and lifestyles or those who participate in wellness programs at work. Penalize workers with higher premiums for engaging in unhealthy activities such as smoking.

- **Preventative Care Benefits** - Offer full coverage for employees who seek preventative medical care and preventative drugs without a deductible, including vaccinations, exams and screenings for diseases such as breast, colon and cervical cancer, and blood pressure and cholesterol.
- **Onsite Health Centers** - Offer onsite health centers and staff health coaches to provide advice on personal health needs.
- **Catering to Individualized Needs** - Offer voluntary benefit options that meet personal and family needs such as homeowner's, automobile and group life insurance. Also, offer discounts on vision, dental, massage therapy, chiropractic care, health club memberships and weight-control programs.
- **Communication Tools** - Provide online tools for employees on health education and estimation on their healthcare expenses.
- **Healthcare Savings Accounts (HSAs)** - Offer HSAs as a way to promote consumerism. Reduce plan options.
- **Analyze Dependent Coverage** - Pay close attention to the spouses and dependents that employees enroll for benefits. Some companies require employees to pay higher premiums if their spouse can obtain health coverage through his/her employer. Conduct an eligibility audit to prove that dependents are considered legal dependents.

Take time this year to ensure that your company is saving as much as possible. Implement these new health options to reduce costs and have a healthier workforce.

Please contact your FAS representative for more information.