

July 2008

Volume 8, Issue 3

From the Masthead



Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. Phone: (905)886-9203

In order to serve you better

To assist you with your employee benefit plan, we are continually updating our website. Located at:

www.mainstayinsurance.ca

The site provides easy access to many insurance company's websites and to the health and dental claim forms you utilize on a regular basis. We have also added links to the log on pages for members (employees) in order to provide quick entry to other websites.

If you use a form that is not on our website and would like it added, please send us an e-mail at:

feedback@mainstayinsurance.ca

Did you know that..?

Are you looking for a family doctor that is accepting patients in Ontario? This can be tougher today than ever before especially for older patients or in growing neighbourhoods that are facing doctor shortages.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is trying to help by providing a web-based solution at their site www.cpso.on.ca.

Click on "Doctor Search" and you can look for family physicians (or areas of specialty) in your area to find those that are accepting patients.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario Website

Keeping your information up to date

You as an employee have a responsibility to keep your employer up to date on status changes that can affect your benefits. Most plans require that such changes be updated within 30 days of the change taking effect.

Status changes can include: birth or adoption of a child, marriage, same sex or common law cohabitation, separation or divorce. If you have a child attending school full time out of the country or if the child is over 21, there is special information that must be provided in order to maintain or obtain benefits.

In addition, changes in spousal benefit coverage (such as the addition or loss of coverage) must be reported as it can affect the way claims are paid.

It is important that all such information is kept current so that your dependants are eligible for coverage. Failing to make a status change within the 30-day period can result in the insurer invoking late enrolment rules. Such action can require you and/or your dependants to complete health questionnaires and may place you at risk of having benefit coverage declined.

Most carriers also have a late enrolment benefit limit on dental care. This usually limits an employee and their dependants to a maximum of \$125 for dental care during

the first year of coverage. This could be a big limitation if a family had even minimal dental requirements during that timeframe.

Another area to be aware of is the impact that a lack of response to an insurance company's request for additional information can have. Often an insurer will ask for health questionnaires, information on hospital or paramedical visits or extra data in order to fully assess an individual's situation. It is your responsibility to ensure that such requests are complied with as soon as possible in order to obtain the level of benefit coverage that you are eligible for.

If your information is not shown correctly on your benefit wallet card, or if you are anticipating a change in status please contact your plan administrator immediately.

Inform you dentist about changes as well

If you are like most clients today, you probably take advantage of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to submit your dental claims. This is the process whereby your dentist submits your claim electronically directly to the insurer.

Depending on your plan design, EDI can mean faster claim turnaround time with cheques typically being mailed within days of service

and direct deposits sometimes appearing as soon as the next day.

There can however be a problem with this system. It can be **too** efficient. The information that is sent by the dentist contains not just the billing information (codes and costs) but also the patient's mailing address. This is to ensure that the claim cheque is mailed to the most current address.

A problem can occur if you have moved and have not updated your dentists' records. It can also cause a problem when a dependant is at a different address than that of the employee (e.g. away at school).

When the claim is submitted, it takes the information that is transmitted and overwrites what was there and then mails the claim to that "old" or "wrong" address. This can cause delays as the claim cheque must then be sent to the new address or it may be returned to the insurer.

What starts out as a simple problem and area of frustration can quickly cause problems in cases such as marital separations where you or your partners claim cheque is sent to your former spouses address.

To avoid these problems, ensure that your dentist has your most up to date information when you next visit.



Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc.

10 Linton Court
Thornhill, Ontario
L3T 5M9

PHONE:
(905) 886-9203

TOLL FREE:
1-877-624-6789
1-877-MAINSTY

FAX:
(905) 707-0216

E-MAIL:
inquiries@mainstayinsurance.ca

WEBSITE:
mainstayinsurance.ca

Note: This side of the newsletter is intended for you, the plan administrator. The information on the 'front' is targeted more to your staff and can be copied and distributed for their reference.

Just in case you were wondering...

Some statistics on blood donation in Canada.

52% — Canadians who have needed blood for themselves or a family member.

28% — Canadians who intend to donate blood.

3.7% — Canadians who actually donate blood.

For details on donating blood visit www.bloodservices.ca

This information is provided as a reference to clients of Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. It is not intended as advice. Your situation and the contract provided by your insurer as well as any relevant legislation shall always take precedence. Always obtain appropriate legal, human resource or accounting advice.

Why we do what we do “a.k.a” Plan design 101

We believe that benefits play an important role in your business. The key reason for their existence is to attract and retain good quality employees.

We are often asked by firms that are establishing plans for the first time, what is the best design to start with? If it were only that easy...there is no simple answer and each client has different needs.

Are you competing to get and keep your staff? If so, then knowing and responding to your competitors' rewards strategy (including benefits) is key. You may have to have a richer plan design just to be in the same game.

If you are a newer business, then we usually suggest starting with a more basic plan that can grow with you. You'll often hear Dave say "it is better to be a hero every time you add to the plan, than it is to be seen as the enemy when you cut it even once".

Mainstay website may have the answer you seek

We are always updating our website www.mainstayinsurance.ca to keep you abreast of issues that affect both your firm and your plan.

Many of you already use the site to access the common forms from the insurers. There is much more information available that can also help you with your plan administration.

As a smaller firm you may be limited to the choices by the "packaged" nature of plans offered. Start with what you can and grow as you can afford it.

If you are a family business or one made up of a group of partners and relatives, then the preceding advice may not fit this situation at all. You are looking for benefits as a form of non-taxable compensation that would have to come out of one of your pockets (either personal or corporate) so a "generous" plan that covers as much as possible may be the answer.

Do you have a younger workforce with a high number of singles? A Health Spending Account (HSA) with flexibility may do the job and control costs at the same time.

A more mature workforce or one requiring mainly family coverage is often concerned with controlling risks. Benefits such as life insurance, Critical Illness coverage, or Long Term

Disability insurance may be as important as travel, drugs and hospital coverage.

There can also be the questions of setting up classes of employees if you want to have different benefit levels based on occupation or years of service for example. It might make sense to provide management with a higher benefit than clerical staff, providing a better package today and a carrot for those who stay and are promoted.

On top of all this, we usually make choices to help with ease of administration (for the employee and employer). We try and avoid having employers with multiple plans through different insurers so that employees don't have to make claims to more firms than necessary.

Is your firm, industry competition or employee makeup changing? Let us know. Maybe now is a good time to make some changes to your plan.

We have included information related to government programs and legislation such as Employment Insurance (EI), including maternity and parental leave, termination pay, and a variety of tax bulletins.

We also have a list of brokers that specialize in other areas of insurance. They can help with

information or pricing on a wide variety of products and services including property and casualty etc.

If you have questions on broad issues related to group benefits, relevant legislation and government programs, odds are the answer is available on the website. If it isn't, please let us know and we'll add it.