



## ***Benefits Administration Letter***

**Number: 16-401**

**Date: August 18, 2016**

### **Subject: 2016 Federal Benefits Open Season: Announcement**

Welcome to the first in our series of 2016 Federal Benefits Open Season Benefits Administration Letters (BAL) for the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program. This BAL provides general information about this year's Federal Benefits Open Season, which runs from **Monday, November 14, 2016 through Monday, December 12, 2016**. You are responsible for ensuring that your employees are aware of the dates of Open Season, how to make changes, and which changes they can make.

### **ENROLLMENT OPTIONS FOLLOWING THE TERMINATION OF A PLAN OR PLAN OPTION**

Benefits Administration Letter [16-202](#); Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program: Enrollment Options Following the Termination of a Plan or Plan Option Final Rule Published, clarifies the actions that employing agencies may take when an enrollee fails to make an enrollment election during the time period provided.

Employing agencies will automatically enroll individuals who do not make an enrollment election during the allotted time period into one of the following: in the event of a plan option termination, the lowest cost remaining plan option provided by the same carrier that is not a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP); or, in the event of a plan termination, into the lowest cost nationwide plan available.

OPM will announce the lowest-cost nationwide plan during the Open Season rollout when rates for the following year are publically released.

### **GUIDE TO FEDERAL BENEFITS- REMINDER**

The Office of Personnel Management no longer produces the *Guide to Federal Benefits* (Guide). This includes both the printed and online versions of the Guide.

The information previously printed in the *Guide* is on our Federal benefits programs' website at [www.opm.gov/insure](http://www.opm.gov/insure).

OPM has created additional online materials, such as FASTFACTS and premium charts for Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) enrollees and former spouses enrolled under Spouse Equity. We also display quality healthcare scores on the FEHB Program website. Visit our website at [www.opm.gov/openseason](http://www.opm.gov/openseason).

### **SUMMARY OF BENEFITS AND COVERAGE - REMINDER**

As a result of the Affordable Care Act, FEHB plans have been providing a summary document on their websites which details information about health plan benefits and coverage. The summary document is also available on our website at [www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/summary-of-benefits](http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/summary-of-benefits).

In order to help FEHB enrollees better understand their coverage and allow them to easily compare different plans and plan options, the Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC) document includes information on the following:

- Cost - deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, and out-of-pocket limits
- Coverage - covered services, examples of covered services and excluded services
- Rights - rights to continue coverage as well as grievance and appeal rights
- A statement that coverage under the plan qualifies as “minimum essential coverage”
- A statement that the health coverage of the plan does meet the minimum value standard for the benefits the plan provides

The SBC will continue to have a disclaimer indicating that the plan brochure remains the official statement of benefits.

Plans will continue to provide information in their Open Season materials to their enrollees about where to find their SBC on their website as well as how to obtain a paper copy of the SBC. The plans may also have their SBC available at health fairs.

### **ELECTRONIC BROCHURES**

We are continuing our Going Green initiative. We encourage you and your employees to continue using the electronic health plan brochures over paper brochures. Agencies share our desire to help lower administrative costs and conserve natural resources and have responded positively to this effort. Remember that copies of all FEHB plan brochures are on our website at [www.opm.gov/FEHBbrochures](http://www.opm.gov/FEHBbrochures) and copies of all FEDVIP brochures are on our website at [www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/dental-vision/plan-information](http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/dental-vision/plan-information).

## **OPEN SEASON OPPORTUNITIES**

During the annual Open Season, employees can take the actions listed below for the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.

- Enroll in a **flexible spending account (FSA)** – a health care and/or dependent care account, under the FSAFEDS Program. Unlike with other programs, employees **MUST** reenroll in FSAFEDS each year to participate. Enrollments **DO NOT** automatically continue from year to year.
  - Carryover has been adopted for health care and limited expense health care FSAs. Participants that are enrolled in one of these FSAs in 2016 will be able to bring up to \$500 of unspent funds from 2016 into 2017. **Participants must re-enroll for the 2017 Benefit Period to be eligible for carryover.** Remember, there is no longer a grace period for these two accounts.
  - The maximum annual election for a Health Care Flexible Spending Account and the Limited Expense Health Care Flexible Spending Account is \$2550 for the 2017 Benefit Period.
  - The minimum election for the flexible spending accounts is \$100 for the 2017 Benefit Period.
  - The maximum annual election for a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account is \$5000 per household for the 2017 Benefit Period. There is no carryover for this account, but there is still a grace period.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a **dental plan** under the FEDVIP Program.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a **vision plan** under the FEDVIP Program.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a **health plan** under the FEHB Program.

## **PRE-OPEN SEASON MATERIALS (ATTACHMENTS)**

The items below are pre-Open Season materials to help employees consider and assess the various choices available to them as they make their Open Season benefits decisions. You are responsible for providing these educational materials to your employees. Please distribute these materials to employees and post them on your agency's intranet in mid-September.

1. Open Season Checklist – a list of items to help enrollees get ready for Open Season
2. Open Season Resources – a list of resources to help enrollees find specific benefits information

3. Frequently Questioned Services – a list of services that OPM often receives inquiries on as to how, or if, the items are covered under our benefit Programs
4. Circle ‘Round Your Benefits – a diagram to help enrollees understand how the three programs that participate in Open Season (FSAFEDS, FEDVIP, and FEHB) work together

Please note that the 2016 Open Season information will be posted on our website, [www.opm.gov/insure](http://www.opm.gov/insure), by the first week in November.

### **UPCOMING BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION LETTERS**

Through the BENEFITSINFO Listserv, you will receive BALs on the following topics in the upcoming months:

- **BAL 16-402 - 2016 Federal Benefits Open Season: Ordering and Distributing Materials** - We will inform you how to order and distribute Open Season materials including Program-specific materials. Anticipated Issue Date: Late August to Mid-September
- **BAL 16-403 - 2016 Federal Benefits Open Season: Conducting the Open Season** - We will provide you with information on counseling employees, annuitant inquiries, carrier contacts, Open Season actions, effective dates, and agency actions. This BAL will include the *Federal Benefits FastFacts: The 2016 Federal Benefits Open Season is Coming!* and *Federal Benefits FastFacts: What to Consider During Open Season*. This BAL will also include Open Season flyers and banners as well as Insurance Benefits flyers and Save Money On flyers. Anticipated Issue Date: Mid-to-Late September
- **BAL 16-404 - 2016 Federal Benefits Open Season: Significant Events** - We will provide information on significant events affecting FSAFEDS and certain plans in FEDVIP and the FEHB Program which you must communicate to your employees. Upon the announcement of the 2017 premium rates, we will release this BAL. Anticipated Issue Date: Late September (if there are any subsequent changes, we will issue a follow-up BAL in October)

As in the past, we will dedicate the 400 series to the Open Season. You can find BALs at [www.opm.gov/retirement-services/publications-forms/benefits-administration-letters](http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/publications-forms/benefits-administration-letters).

**WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Visit our website at [www.opm.gov/insure](http://www.opm.gov/insure) to learn more about these Programs. We will post FEHB and FEDVIP premium rates for 2017 in early October. You will find specific Federal Benefits Open Season information on this website by the first week in November.

If you have specific questions, please contact your agency's benefits officer. If you do not know who this person is, please go to <http://apps.opm.gov/abo> where you will find a list of agencies and their Headquarters Benefits Officers.

Sincerely,

John O'Brien  
Director  
Healthcare and Insurance