

Office of Personnel Management
Retirement and Insurance Group



1920



1954



1959



1986

Benefits Administration Letter

Number: 96-403

Date: September 19, 1996

SUBJECT: 1996 FEHB Open Season: Ordering and Distribution

OVERVIEW

**Open Season
Material**

Open season material is prepared by OPM for use by employees and other FEHB enrollees during open season and throughout the year.

The following material will be used during the 1996 open season:

1. *FEHB Guides*. These booklets are prepared for various groups of enrollees. They contain a comparison chart giving general information about the plans and their premium rates and the FEHB Customer Satisfaction Survey results. This year they will also include information on which plans are accredited by the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA).
2. *Plan brochures*. These brochures are the statements of benefits, exclusions, and limitations.
3. *Material for the visually impaired*.
4. *SF 2809* (Health Benefits Registration Form) and *SF 2809-A* (Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Information for Federal Civilian Employees and U.S. Postal Service Employees).

**Shipping and
Packaging**

Printing contractors will continue to use color-coded shipping labels to distinguish between FEHB

Guides (goldenrod) and plan brochures (pink). FEHB Guides and plan brochures will be packaged in groups of 25 and boxed at up to 250 Guides per container.

FEHB GUIDES

Names and Numbers

1. **1997 FEHB Guide for Federal civilian employees (RI 70-1).** This guide will be used by most employees. The rates shown are the enrollee's share of the biweekly and monthly premiums. [The corresponding guide for Postal employees is RI 70-2.]
 2. **1997 FEHB Guide for Certain temporary employees (Those eligible to enroll in FEHB under 5 U.S.C. 8906a) (RI 70-8).** This guide shows the full biweekly and monthly premium rates (without a Government contribution) for all plans.
 3. **1997 FEHB Guide for Individuals eligible to enroll for: Temporary continuation of coverage and Coverage under the spouse equity law or similar statutes providing coverage to former spouses (RI 70-5).** This guide shows the monthly premium rates for enrolled former spouses (total premium) and for persons eligible for TCC (total premium plus 2% administrative add-on).
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How Do Agencies Get the Guides?

OPM will arrange to have supplies of the FEHB Guides shipped to each agency's designated distribution point(s).

In addition, the FEHB Guides will be available on OPM Mainstreet.

How Many Do Agencies Get?

The quantity is based on information on the number of eligible employees provided by headquarters Insurance Officers to OPM.

For RI 70-1 and RI 70-8 the quantity is equal to 60% of the reported number of eligible employees.

**What Do Agencies
Do with Them?**

RI 70-1 and RI 70-8 will not be printed in sufficient quantities to distribute a personal copy to each employee. Before open season begins, agencies must notify employees of the availability of RI 70-1 and RI 70-8. Employees should be given their agency contact to obtain a copy of RI 70-1 or RI 70-8 if they are considering making a change during open season.

RI 70-7 will no longer be printed. Instead, we asked that the employee population that previously received the RI 70-7 be included in the RI 70-1 quantities.

Please note: The RI 70-5 (for individuals covered under TCC) and the RI 70-8 (for temporary employees) will not be printed on different color paper this year.

Agencies should hold a quantity of RI 70-1 and RI 70-8 in reserve for use during calendar year 1997. Throughout the year, agencies must give the appropriate FEHB Guide to new employees and others who become eligible to participate in the FEHB Program.

RI 70-5 will be printed in the same quantities as in the past. Agencies are responsible for distributing RI 70-5 to former spouses and TCC enrollees whose enrollments they maintain. (Those agencies for which the USDA's National Finance Center maintains these accounts do not have this responsibility.)

How Do Agencies Order More?

Additional (limited) quantities will be available upon written request only from agency headquarters Insurance Officers after January 1, 1997. [We cannot fill orders for agency field offices. They must request additional stock from the agency headquarters Insurance Officer.]

The address is OPM/RIS, Forms Analysis and Design, Room 4H28, Attn: RI-[*insert number of the guide being ordered*], Washington, DC, 20415, or FAX 202-606-0910.

Be sure to include an agency contact, telephone number, and the shipping address.

PLAN BROCHURES

How Do Agencies Get Managed Fee-for-Service Plan Brochures?

Fee-for-service plans will ship a supply of their brochures to each agency's designated distribution point(s).

How Do Agencies Get Brochures for Plans with a Point of Service Product?

If the plan is a managed fee-for-service plan with a point of service product, the plan will ship a supply of their brochures to each agency's designated distribution point(s).
If the plan is a health maintenance organization (HMO) with a point of service product, you must order plan brochures directly from the plans, as described below.

How Do Agencies Get Health Maintenance Organization Plan Brochures?

Agencies must order HMO brochures directly from the plans. OPM will send agencies a list of plan contacts to use for this purpose.

The personnel official designated for each agency installation must determine the number of employees working at or serviced by the installation who are eligible to enroll in each HMO; i.e., the number of employees located in the plan's enrollment area. The installation should then contact each plan and provide the plan with:

1. a conservative estimate of the number of eligible employees (be sure to include former spouses and TCC enrollees in this estimate) and
2. the address to which the plan should ship the brochures.

After receiving this information, the plan will ship a supply of brochures directly to the installation.

How Many Do Agencies Get?

Managed fee-for-service plans are given a distribution list that shows the quantity they are to ship to each distribution point (generally 15% of the agency's eligible FEHB population). Each agency orders HMO brochures directly from the plan and should be sent a quantity equal to 15% of the number of eligible employees. This amount is computed by the plans at the time of shipment.

What Should Agencies Do with Them?

Each employee currently enrolled will receive a brochure from his/her plan, along with a notice of the plan's 1997 rates.

Agencies must keep a supply of brochures on hand for reference and for distribution to employees who decide to enroll or change plans. These brochures must be readily accessible to employees.

- Agencies must maintain close control over the issuing of plan brochures. Employees should be permitted to take copies home for review. If an employee enrolls or changes health plans, he/she should keep the brochure for that plan. Other brochures should be returned promptly to the office.

Wherever possible, agencies must give their former spouse and TCC enrollees the same access to brochures as employees. Agencies must tell their former spouse and TCC enrollees how to obtain brochures and SF 2809 if they are interested in changing plans. If the employing office maintaining the former spouse or TCC enrollment is unable to fill a request for a brochure (e.g., if the enrollee is in an area not served by the plans for which the employing office has brochures), the individual should be advised to call the carrier at the telephone number listed in the FEHB Guide.

**How Do Agencies
Order More?**

Agencies must request additional brochures directly from the plans.

MATERIAL FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

What Is Available?

1. **1997 FEHB Guide for Federal civilian employees (RI 70-10).** The content of this booklet is the same as that of the RI 70-1; however, it is printed in large type on 11 x 17 inch paper.
 2. **1997 Fee-for-service Plan Cassette Tapes For Visually Impaired Federal Civilian Employees.** These are tone-indexed cassette tapes of the brochures for the open fee-for-service plans.
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How Do Agencies Get RI 70-10?

OPM will arrange to have supplies of RI 70-10 shipped to each agency's headquarters distribution point based on the quantities indicated by headquarters insurance officers in May. This amount should be sufficient for open season use, as well as for distribution to visually impaired employees who become eligible to enroll during 1997.

Additional copies may be ordered in writing by the agency headquarters Insurance Officer. The address is OPM/RIS, Forms Analysis and Design, Room 4H28, Attn: RI 70-10, Washington, DC, 20415, or FAX 202-606-0910.

Be sure to include an agency contact, telephone number, and the shipping address.

How Do Agencies Get Cassette Tapes?

Cassette tapes will be available directly from the plans upon written request from agency Headquarters Insurance Officers. Attached is the list of plan contacts to use for ordering the cassette tapes.

Agency Responsibilities

All Federal agencies at the headquarters and installation levels should take affirmative steps to seek out visually impaired employees and to communicate the availability of the large-print FEHB Guide and the cassette tapes.

SF 2809 (HEALTH BENEFITS REGISTRATION FORM)

How Do Agencies Order?

Agencies must order SF 2809 directly from GSA supply centers, just as they order other OPM-issued Standard Forms. SF 2809 is available from GSA/Federal Supply Service using the normal FEDSTRIP/MILSTRIP procedures. Contact your purchasing or acquisitions office for your agency's procedures.

SF 2809 is not available from GSA Customer Service Centers or from OPM.

What Is the Cost?

The National Stock Number (NSN) for **SF 2809** is 7540-01-231-6227, and the price is approximately \$11.86 per hundred.

- Please note that the August 1992 edition is the **only** version of SF 2809 that can be used.
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What Should Agencies Do With The Form?

Agencies must keep sufficient quantities of SF 2809 available to handle requests. Employing offices should give an SF 2809 to employees and former spouse and TCC enrollees who are enrolled in plans that will not be participating in the Program after December 31, 1996.

PREMIUM RATES

Notification

OPM announces premium rate changes each year in a press release. Agency payroll offices, however, must not use these rates to update their payroll systems.

OPM's Office of Financial Control and Management will issue a Payroll Office Letter providing the official enrollee withholding and Government contribution rates and other information relevant to payroll offices.

This Letter will also provide agencies with information on obtaining an IBM-compatible floppy disk containing the 1997 FEHB rates.



Abby L. Block, Chief
Insurance Policy
and Information Division

Attachment

Open Fee-for-service Plan Audio Cassette Coordinators

<u>Plan</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Fax</u>
Blue Cross and Blue Shield	Paula Spurway	(202)942-1274	(202)942-1265
Alliance	Larry Lindsey	(202)939-6369	(202)939-6389
APWU	Carroll Midgett	(301)622-5554	(301)622-5591
GEHA	Jane Overton	(816)257-3330	(816)257-3233
Mail Handlers	Mary Beth Lynch	(301)517-2059	(301)517-2127
NALC	Dave Lorenz	(703)729-4677	(703)729-8109
Postmasters	Linda Griffin	(703)683-1664	(703)683-2937