

OPM NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 10, 1996

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S HEALTH PROGRAM IN GOOD HEALTH; OPM UNVEILS USER-FRIENDLY, OPEN SEASON GUIDE

Washington, D.C. -- For the third consecutive year, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program has passed its physical exam.

A recent survey of employees and retirees enrolled in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) has found that 87 percent of fee-for-service and 85 percent of Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) enrollees are satisfied with the overall performance of their health plans. Enrollees rated their health plans in five key areas: access to care, quality of care, doctors' availability, coverage, and customer service and paperwork.

With respect to specific aspects of health care, the survey also found that 93 percent of people covered by traditional fee-for-service health plans and 88 percent of those covered by HMOs are satisfied with the quality of care they receive from doctors and medical facilities participating in the program. Another 94 percent of fee-for-service customers and 89 percent of HMO customers claim overall satisfaction with their access to medical care.

These and other findings are contained in the Office of Personnel Management's 1997 FEHB Guide, which has been enhanced to provide easier-to-find, more useful information. Survey results published in the guide are based on the actual responses received from more than 55,000 FEHBP enrollees. The FEHB Guide also has information individuals can use to compare benefits and premium rates of the more than 380 health plans participating in the program in 1997.

"In this age of information and customer-service, OPM has made a commitment to provide the fullest, most comprehensive information possible to those who must select a health plan for them and their families," said OPM Director Jim King. "Our survey can help FEHBP customers make an educated decision on which health plan is right for their medical needs and their pocketbooks."

OPM administers the FEHBP, the nation's largest employer-sponsored health insurance program. The program covers more than nine million federal employees, retirees and their dependents.

Release of the customer satisfaction survey and the FEHB Guide coincides with the approach

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of the annual open season, which this year runs from November 11 through December 9. During this four-week period, current enrollees may change health plans, and employees not covered by FEHBP may elect coverage.

The FEHB Guide contains a number of new, user-friendly features, including a list of health plans that offer a “point-of-service” product aimed at reducing enrollees’ out-of-pocket medical expenses. Another feature notes the accreditation status of managed care plans that have been reviewed by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), a nationally-recognized organization that evaluates the quality of managed care plans.

Other user-friendly features of the FEHB guide include:

- o a “key” on health plan brochure covers pointing to the location of important information on coverage changes
- o denotation by a “star” of top-rated plans as determined by the customer satisfaction survey.