



***Retirement and Insurance Service
Benefits Administration Letter***

Number: 99-409

Date: August 17, 1999

Subject: 1999 Federal Employees Health Benefits Open Season: Ordering and Distribution of Material

OVERVIEW

Open Season Materials

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) prepares open season materials for employees and other Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) enrollees to use during open season and throughout the year.

The following materials will be available during the 1999 open season:

- 1. 2000 Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans (FEHB Guides).** There are different FEHB Guides for various groups of enrollees. They contain a comparison chart giving general information about the plans and their benefits and premiums, the annual FEHB customer satisfaction survey results, and information on which plans are accredited by the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA) and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).
- 2. Plan brochures.** These brochures are the statements of benefits, exclusions, and limitations.
- 3. Materials for the visually-impaired.**
- 4. SF 2809** (Health Benefits Election Form)

Shipping and Packing

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 items per container.

FEHB GUIDES

Names and Numbers

- 1. 2000 Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans for Federal Civilian Employees (RI 70-1).** This Guide is the one most employees use. 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. 2000 Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans for TCC and Former Spouse Enrollees (RI 70-5).** This Guide shows the monthly premiums for Spouse Equity enrollees (total premium) and TCC enrollees (total premium plus 2% administrative add-on).
- 3. 2000 Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans 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 premiums (without a Government contribution) for eligible temporary employees.

How Do Agencies Get the Guides?

We will arrange to have supplies of the FEHB Guides shipped to each agency's designated shipping points.

In addition, all of the FEHB Guides will be available for downloading and printing from our FEHB web site: www.opm.gov/insure.

How Many Guides Do Agencies Get?

In its annual "distribution call letter" sent to agencies in May, OPM encouraged agencies to request a smaller number of FEHB Guides, since the Guides are so readily available on the Internet. Agency headquarters Insurance Officers provided OPM with information on the number of eligible employees in their agencies. Agencies will receive an amount of RI 70-1 and RI 70-8 equal to 50% of their reported number of eligible employees, unless they requested a smaller amount.

RI 70-5 will be printed in the same quantities as in the past (an amount equal to 111% of each agency's TCC and Spouse Equity population).

What Should Agencies Do with the Guides?

Since RI 70-1 and RI 70-8 will not be printed in sufficient quantities to give a

personal copy to each employee, agencies must notify employees of the availability of these Guides before open season begins. Agencies should give employees the name of an agency person to contact to get copies of the Guides, if they are considering making a change during open season.

PLEASE NOTE: To help agencies easily distinguish between the Guides, RI 70-5 (for TCC/Spouse Equity enrollees) and RI 70-8 (for temporary employees) will be different colors. RI 70-5 will have a gray cover, and RI 70-8 will be printed on buff paper.

Agencies should hold a quantity of RI 70-1 and RI 70-8 in reserve for use during calendar year 2000. Throughout the year, agencies must give the appropriate FEHB Guide to new employees and others who become eligible to participate in the FEHB Program.

Agencies are responsible for distributing RI 70-5 to the Spouse Equity and TCC enrollees whose enrollments they maintain. (Those agencies for which the National Finance Center maintains these accounts do not have this responsibility.)

Can Agencies Order More?

Agencies can order limited additional quantities *after* January 1, 2000. Only agency headquarters Insurance Officers can submit a request for additional Guides. OPM will not fill a request from an agency field office.

The written request must be sent to: OPM/RIS, Forms Analysis and Design, Room 4H28, ATTN: RI-*[insert the number of the Guide being ordered]*, Washington, DC 20415-3430, or FAX the order to 202-606-0910.

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

PLAN BROCHURES

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

Managed fee-for-service plans will ship a supply of their brochures to each agency's designated distribution points.

How Do Agencies Get Health Maintenance Organization Plan Brochures?

Agencies must order HMO brochures directly from the plans. OPM will provide agencies with a list of plan contacts for this purpose in a later BAL.

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 service area. The installation must then contact each plan in its area and provide the plan with:

1. A conservative estimate of the number of eligible employees. (Be sure to include Spouse Equity and TCC enrollees in this estimate.)
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 Do Agencies Get Brochures for Plans with a Point of Service Product?

Managed fee-for-service plans with a point of service product will ship a supply of their brochures to each agency's designated distribution points.

For HMOs with a point of service product, agencies must order plan brochures directly from the plans, as described above.

How Many Brochures Do Agencies Get?

Managed fee-for-service plans will get a distribution list that shows the quantity they are to ship to each distribution point (generally 15% of the agency's eligible FEHB population).

Agencies order HMO (and HMO point of service) brochures directly from the plans. The plans will compute a quantity equal to 15% of the number of eligible employees and will send that number to each agency.

What Should Agencies Do with Them?

Each employee currently enrolled will receive a brochure directly from his/her plan.

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 allowed to take copies home for review. If an employee enrolls or changes health plans, he/she should keep the brochure for that plan. The employee must promptly return other brochures to the personnel office.

Wherever possible, agencies must give their Spouse Equity and TCC enrollees the same access to brochures as employees. Agencies must tell their Spouse Equity and TCC enrollees how to obtain brochures and SF 2809 enrollment forms if they

are interested in changing plans. If the employing office maintaining the enrollment can't fill a request for a brochure (e.g., if the enrollee lives in an area not served by the plans for which the employing office has brochures), the employing office should advise the individual to call the plan at the telephone number listed in the FEHB Guide.

How Do Agencies Order More Brochures?

Agencies must request additional brochures directly from the plans.

MATERIAL FOR THE VISUALLY-IMPAIRED

What Is Available?

- 1. 2000 Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans for Federal Civilian Employees (RI 70-10).** The content in this Guide is the same as in RI 70-1, but it is printed in large type on 11" x 17" paper.
- 2. 2000 managed fee-for-service plan cassette tapes for visually-impaired employees.** These are tone-indexed cassette tapes of the brochures for the open managed fee-for-service plans.
- 3.** All of the information in the FEHB Guides, as well as each health plan brochure, is available on the FEHB **web site** in electronic formats suitable for the visually-impaired.

How Do Agencies Get RI 70-10?

OPM will arrange to have supplies of RI 70-10 shipped to each agency's headquarters distribution points based on the quantities indicated by headquarters Insurance Officers. This amount should be sufficient for open season use, as well as for distribution to visually-impaired employees who become eligible to enroll during 2000.

Agency headquarters Insurance Officers may order additional copies in writing. The address is OPM/RIS, Forms Analysis and Design, Room 4H28, ATTN: RI 70-10, Washington, DC 20415-3430, or FAX the order to 202-606-0910.

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

How Do Agencies Get Cassette Tapes?

Agencies must order cassette tapes directly from the open managed fee-for-service plans. A list of plan contacts to use for ordering the tapes is attached.

Agency Responsibilities

All Federal agencies at the headquarters and installation levels must take steps to seek out visually-impaired employees and to let them know that the large-print FEHB Guide, the cassette tapes, and the FEHB web site are available.

SF 2809 (HEALTH BENEFITS ELECTION FORM)

Revised Form

OPM has revised the SF 2809; the revised form is in the final clearance process. The new form will be available in time for the upcoming open season and is the *only* version of the form that can be used. We will issue a BAL containing detailed information about the revised SF 2809 as soon as the form is ready.

Ordering SF 2809

Agencies must order SF 2809 from General Services Administration (GSA) supply centers, just as you order any other OPM-issued Standard Forms, using the normal FEDSTRIP/MILSTRIP procedures. Contact your purchasing or acquisitions office for your agency's procedures. SF 2809 should also be available from GSA Customer Service Centers.

SF 2809 is **not** available from OPM.

An upcoming BAL will contain additional information regarding ordering SF 2809.

Agencies whose employees have access to Employee Express to make open season changes should keep this in mind when determining how large a supply of SF 2809 they need to order.

What Should Agencies Do with the Form?

Agencies must keep sufficient quantities of SF 2809 available to handle employee requests, both during open season and throughout the year. Agencies must give the form to employees and Spouse Equity and TCC enrollees who are enrolled in plans that will not be participating in the FEHB Program in 2000.

PREMIUMS

OPM announces premium changes each year in a news release. Agency payroll offices, however, must not use these rates to update their payroll systems. OPM's Office of Systems, Finance, and Administration will issue a Payroll Office Letter giving the official enrollee withholding rates and Government contribution rates and other information

relevant to payroll offices. The Payroll Office Letter will also provide agencies with information on obtaining a PC-compatible floppy disk containing the 2000 FEHB rates.



Abby L. Block, Chief
Insurance Policy
and Information Division

Attachment

PLAN CONTACTS FOR ORDERING AUDIO CASSETTE TAPES

| PLAN | CONTACT | PHONE | FAX |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Alliance | Cal Foster | 202-939-6369 | 202-939-6389 |
| APWU | Carroll Midgett | 301-622-5554 | 301-622-5591 |
| Blue Cross/Blue Shield | Paula Spurway | 202-942-1274 | 202-942-1265 |
| 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 |