MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY

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IDEAS for FACULTY AND STAFF to help CONTROL COSTS

Suggestions from the Insurance and Benefits Committee

Have an idea to add to this list? Contact HR at msu.hr@murraystate.edu or your I & B Committee Representative

1. **Try Generics** - Make sure you are taking the generic form of prescribed medications when possible. Many generics can be purchased out-of-pocket (rather than under the plan) through local pharmacies for LESS than the price of the $20 co-pay. Pay for these prescriptions out-of-pocket and save the health plan and yourself money. For example, if your physician prescribes *metoprolol* in a 90 day quantity, you can purchase this cheaper at Kroger's or Wal-Mart. It is a generic and it can be filled outside the health plan for about $10 or $12 for a 90 day supply. This cost is less than the $20 co-pay you would have to pay if you used the health plan's mail order service; and the mail order service also charges the plan another $40 for the 90 day supply of *metoprolol*.
2. **Earn Wellness Incentives** - Take advantage of the ***Healthy Lifestyles*** program to get $50 for completing a Health Assessment Survey through Anthem on-line; and then track various efforts to qualify for another $50, $100 or $150 pay for meeting healthier activities at the bronze, silver, or gold level. This additional cash to you from MSU (it is taxed) can offset part or all of the increase in premium for 2011.
3. **Use FSA's** - Take advantage of a flexible spending account so you can use non-taxed dollars to buy medical, prescription, dental, or vision services, supplies, equipment, prescription drugs, co-pays, co-insurance, and meeting deductibles. This can save you 10-30% of your out-of-pocket expense depending on what tax bracket you are in. Remember, plan your spending under the Flexible Spending Account based on past average expenses and known future expenses. You want to spend all of the money in your Flexible Spending Account within the 15 month period – the calendar year and three month grace period into the following calendar year.
4. **Consider the HDHP** - If you have been relatively healthy and usually get only preventive medical services each year under the plan, consider the High Deductible Healthcare Plan where premiums are very low and you get the University to give you some money to help defray the cost of non-preventive services that you might need -- $300 + administrative fees for single coverage and $600 +administrative fees for spouse/child/family coverages.
5. **Use Only Effective Drugs** - Don't get sucked in by advertising claims of drug companies. Check the effectiveness findings and talk to your physician, nurse-practitioner, or pharmacist about the most effective drugs for people with your condition. Use tried and true drugs with known effectiveness before trying "newer" drugs that often cost much more, but are no more effective. These "brand-named" drugs often cost much more and this cost means higher co-pays for you and higher charges from pharmacies to the health plan.
6. **Use Health Services on Campus and Attend Health Fairs** - Use the on-site health services for minor treatments and lab testing along with participating in the twice-a-year health fairs. These services are "free" to employees and are not charged to the health plan so you are essentially getting services without incurring costs for the MSU health plan. It is simple to use the health service on the ground floor of Wells Hall with entrance on the quad.
7. **Avoid out-of-network providers** - Use in-network providers whenever possible. In-network provider can be in any state as long as the provider is a member of Blue-Cross/Blue Shield network. These providers have agreed to accept a set amount and this reduces costs for the health plan. You can also check out how well hospital score at performing some routine procedures at a variety of government websites. Use evidence rather of good quality rather than word of mouth recommendations when making your medical care decisions.
8. **Ask HR & Learn About Your Benefits** - Know what your health benefits are and how to request them from health providers. Talk with Mary Armstrong in HR before you make any binding decisions so that she can help you know your options. Make sure you let your provider know when you are using the "Preventive" benefits of the health plan.
9. **Consider using Kentucky's Health Plan for Children**- If your family income is equal to or less than 200% of the federal poverty level, your children may be eligible for enrollment in the SCHIP –state children's health insurance plan – where there is good coverage and lower co-pays. This is outside the MSU plan, but if you need coverage for your children and cannot afford an MSU family plan, then SCHIP may help cover your children while you cover yourself with the high deductible plan at no monthly premium to you.

As of October 18, 2010