

Benefits

BUZZ

Benefits tips brought to you by
AxisPointe Benefit Advisors, LLC

June 2017

AHCA Passes House

The American Health Care Act (AHCA) was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on May 4, 2017. The AHCA will move to the Senate for a vote and possible amendments.

The AHCA needed 216 votes to pass in the House. It passed on a party-line vote, with 217 Republicans and no Democrats voting in favor of the legislation. It needs a simple majority vote in the Senate to pass.

Impact on ACA Provisions

The AHCA would reduce the penalties imposed under the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) individual and employer mandate provisions to zero beginning in 2016, effectively repealing both mandates.

While individuals would not be required to obtain health insurance, beginning with open enrollment for 2019, the AHCA would allow issuers to add a 30

percent late-enrollment surcharge for applicants that had a lapse in coverage of more than 63 days during the previous 12 months. The surcharge would be discontinued after 12 months.

The AHCA would repeal the ACA's current subsidies for low-income individuals who purchase coverage through an Exchange. The subsidies would be replaced with portable tax credits in 2020.

The ACA's rules on essential health benefits and community rating would stay in place, but states could apply for waivers from these provisions.

HSA Enhancements

The AHCA also includes provisions to encourage the use of health savings accounts (HSAs), such as increasing the annual contribution limit.

For a more detailed overview of the AHCA and its potential impact on your organization, please contact AxisPointe Benefit Advisors, LLC.

DID YOU KNOW?

Generally, wellness incentives are subject to the same federal tax rules as any other employee rewards or prizes.

Cash and cash equivalents (for example, a \$100 gift card for taking a health risk assessment) are **always taxable**.

Another taxable example is an employer's payment of gym or health club membership fees, unless the membership qualifies as medical care.

Pre-existing Conditions Under the ACA

The ACA currently protects individuals from being denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions. Specifically, it prohibits both exclusions of coverage of **specific benefits** and **complete exclusions** from a plan or coverage based on a pre-existing condition.

The AHCA retains these protections. However, it would allow issuers in states that receive waivers of the community rating rules to charge higher premiums for individuals with pre-existing conditions, in some cases. The AHCA would establish a fund to provide assistance to individuals that have higher premiums due to pre-existing conditions under these circumstances.

AxisPointe Benefit Advisors, LLC will keep you updated with any applicable legislative developments.



HR Brief

Human Resources tips brought to you by
AxisPointe Benefit Advisors, LLC

June 2017

Only One-third of Employees are Engaged at Work

Employee engagement—or the commitment and energy that employees bring to work—impacts productivity and performance. According to a recent Gallup poll, only 33 percent of employees are engaged at work.

Engaged vs. Disengaged Employees

Engaged employees are more than just satisfied with their jobs, they are committed to the company and its goals. They have passion, pride and energy for their work and their organization, and are willing to go the extra mile on a regular basis. Employees who are truly engaged stay because they enjoy their work and support the company.

On the flipside, disengaged employees simply work for a paycheck, favorable working conditions or job security.

It's important to note that employees can enjoy their work and be satisfied without being necessarily engaged.

The Impact of Engagement

Employee engagement has been linked to decreased turnover rates and increased productivity, efficiency and profits. This information indicates that employee engagement is critical to retaining the best and the brightest employees at your organization.

Tips for Raising Employee Engagement

By identifying areas that may be hindering employee engagement, your company can focus on improving those areas to strive toward a more engaged, productive and profitable workforce.

Although there is no tried-and-true way to raise employee engagement, experts agree that you can start by doing the following:

- Demonstrate a top-down commitment to engagement.
- Define your engaged purpose.
- Prove your ability to measure and score engagement levels on an ongoing basis.

DID YOU KNOW?

A team leader (manager) and his or her knowledge, skills and talent can cause 70 percent of the variance between weak, good and great company cultures.

Take time to evaluate your company's culture. Remember, a positive and strong company culture vastly improves retention rates as employees who identify with and feel a sense of belonging to a company culture are happier and are more likely to stay at an organization for longer.

Prevent a PR Crisis from Turning into a PR Disaster

Few people ever expect to have to deal with a public relations (PR) crisis until they are in the throes of one. To improve your organization's ability to handle a PR crisis, plan your response beforehand. Consider the following four suggestions when planning your company's crisis response:

1. Create a crisis communication team who will be responsible for creating and executing the crisis response and managing the situation as it unfolds.
2. Prepare a company fact sheet, listing information about your company to hand out if a crisis occurs.
3. If a crisis occurs, do not wait too long to go public with any problem that affects your customers.
4. Encourage company leaders and the crisis response team to think twice about the tone of any response they put out.

