Consider these options during benefits open enrollment

Division of Human Resources
October 2023

Benefits open enrollment has started and ends on Nov. 17 at 5 p.m. This is the one time each year when benefits-eligible employees can update their benefits elections. Although no action is required this year, below are some options that employees might want to consider as they assess what is right for them and their financial situation. Please note that the following scenarios are broad descriptions. Employees might not fit neatly in any one of them. All of the options are available to all benefits-eligible employees.

To see how the selections affect take-home pay, employees are encouraged to use the Paycheck Modeler tool in UAccess. Instructions for using the tool can be found on the Open Enrollment Benefits Options webpage.

Single with no children or dependents

Those who receive mostly preventive and routine care and do not have to worry about others’ health care should compare the High-Deductible Health Plan with Health Savings Account and the Triple Choice Plan.

The HDHP has lower premiums than the TCP. Plus, the University contributes $720 annually to an HSA for single employees ($1,440 for families). HSAs are used to set aside money pre-tax to use for things like copayments, prescription drugs, bandages, birth control, chiropractic care, contact lenses, counseling, lab fees and more. Funds in an HSA are never forfeited, even if an employee leaves the University, so they can even be a savings vehicle for health care expenses in retirement. Also: Employees can make additional pre-tax contributions each paycheck.

Those choosing the TCP might consider a health care flexible spending account, which allows employees to set aside money pre-tax to use for qualified medical expenses. For those enrolled in the HDHP with HSA, a limited FSA is still an option for dental and vision expenses.

For those early in their careers, this may be a great time to start regularly putting extra cash aside in a supplemental retirement plan so that it can grow for decades. The Voluntary 403(b) Plan and 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan both have pre-tax and Roth options and allow employees to contribute even a small amount of money. These can be enrolled in at any time.

Parent with children or a caregiver with dependents

These employees should consider adding a dependent care FSA to their benefits plan. The dependent care FSA allows employees to set aside money pre-tax for dependent care expenses that allow the employee to attend work or school. Some compare the eligible expenses and include childcare, nannies, babysitters, summer or day camps, and even elder care. This benefit can be used for children under the age of 13 and a family member or adult who is a tax dependent and unable to care for themselves.

When looking at health coverage for multiple people, employees should be sure to look at the HDHP and the Triple Choice Plan. The Triple Choice Plan has fixed copays and may have more predictable costs at the time of service and lower out-of-pocket costs for unexpected medical expenses. The HDHP has higher deductibles, but the University contributes $1,440 annually to each family’s HSA.

Those who have TCP coverage and don’t already participate in a health care FSA should keep in mind that eligible expenses include things important to current and future parents, like orthodontia, breast pumps, speech therapy, childbirth classes and doula. For those who the HDHP, HSAs cover similar qualified medical expenses.

Employees might want to also consider short-term disability insurance, which provides income during the six-month waiting period before long-term disability benefits begin.

Similarly, now might a good time to look at supplemental life insurance.

Living and working outside Arizona

All elective benefits options, whether they are administered by the University or by the Arizona Department of Administration, are available to employees outside Arizona. (This even includes recently expanded Life & Work Connections benefits.)

Employees living outside Arizona are encouraged to check provider networks in their state. When choosing between Blue Cross Blue Shield or UnitedHealthcare, note that UHC has a more extensive provider network outside of Arizona.

When choosing between the dental HMO and PPO plans, note that the HMO option does not have coverage in certain states.

When you are ready to access your enrollment, log in to UAccess, select UA Employee Main Homepage and select the open enrollment tile.

Questions about open enrollment should go to the Division of Human Resources at hrsolutions@arizona.edu or 520-621-3660.

Note: Outside of open enrollment, the only time employees can change their benefits is when they experience a qualified life event like marriage, birth of a child or loss of coverage.