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Considering Dental and Vision Insurance? The Time is Now

Often times the added expenses of certain dental and/or vision treatments can be quite costly, and are not covered under Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB). The Federal Employee Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) provides great options to help reduce the cost of these procedures. The tips below will help you plan ahead to maximize these benefits.

Open Season: Enroll, Cancel, or Change

With Open Season around the corner, now is the time to review all the dental and vision plans that are available. Compare provider plans to check the costs and services. If you have FEHB, be sure to see what dental/vision procedures are included in your plan. This is the time to enroll in FEDVIP, cancel coverage, or make changes to your current plan. Once enrolled in FEDVIP, your coverage automatically continues each year in the same plan unless you make changes. Do not wait until the last minute to risk losing the opportunity to make changes or cancel FEDVIP if you no longer need it. Compare

plans at www.benefeds.com or <https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/dental-vision/plan-information/plans/dental>.

Options and Details

Depending on your health needs, you may not need dental and/or vision insurance every year. Did you know that most FEHB plans have minimal dental and vision coverage included, such as assistance with cleanings and eye exams? In these instances it may not be beneficial to enroll in FEDVIP. On the other hand, proper planning can save you from paying completely for out of pocket dental procedures or glasses/contacts. Perhaps you might enroll in dental insurance this year and vision the next, and alternate each year. Evaluate your needs; learn about the coverages plans offer so you can make the best decision for you and your family. Also, be aware that some dental insurance providers have waiting periods for services such as Orthodontics, while others do not.

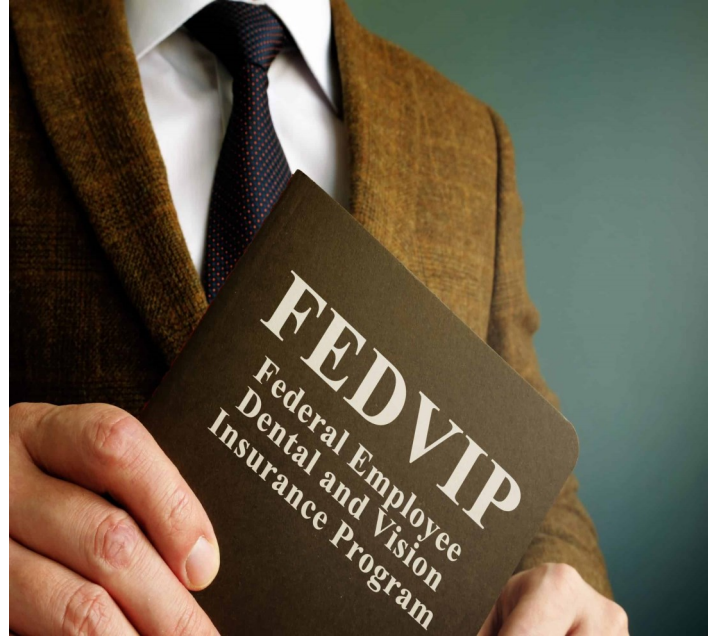
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Considering Dental and Vision Insurance? The Time is Now (continued)

Lastly, pay attention to dental provider plan maximums, as one or two expensive dental procedures could deplete your entire annual allotment.

FEDVIP and Flexible Spending Account (FSA)

Enrolling in a FSA allows participants to pay for eligible health and dependent care medical expenses using pre-tax dollars. This includes the additional non-covered services or out of pocket costs associated with dental and vision coverages. Claims are easy to submit and payment to your bank is swift. Find additional FSA information including a calculator to estimate tax savings at <https://fsafeds.com/>.



DoD Wage Committee Resumes

The DCPAS Wage and Salary Division is very pleased to announce the resumption of the DoDWC and the publication of all held Federal Wage Systems (FWS) schedules for Appropriated and Nonappropriated Fund Employees.

Earlier this year, the Secretary of Defense's Zero - Based caused a conclusion to the DoDWC's membership and meeting, inadvertently pausing issuance of 122 FWS schedules for approximately 62,000 Federal employees. This affected both DoD and non-DoD employees, with the largest non-DoD agency being the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The first DoDWC meeting resumed on September 7, 2021, resulting in approval and publication of the held FWS schedules: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/09/07/2021-19168/departments-of-defense-wage-committee-dodwc>

[-notice-of-federal-advisory-committee-meeting.](#)

Please visit the Federal Register to view the agenda and wage schedules announced for publication each meeting. The most recently published FWS schedules are located at <https://wageandsalary.dcpas.osd.mil/>.



Retirement Terms You Should Know

Retirement and investment terms can be confusing. Here are some common terms and definitions to help you prepare for the future.

1. **Defined Benefit Plan**—A “qualified” employer-sponsored retirement plan. “Qualified” means that you receive certain tax benefits under the law such as tax deferred earnings. The benefit is a pre-established and the best example of this type of plan is a “pension” or “annuity”.
2. **Defined Contribution Plan**—A qualified employer-sponsored retirement plan in which employees and employers make regular contributions, but the payout in retirement depends on how the employees elect to invest their contributions. The best example of this plan is the “Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) or 401K”.
3. **Individual Retirement Account (IRA)**—A qualified individually sponsored retirement account. Not to be confuse this with an employer-sponsored account such as TSP, this is a individually owned account and the contribution limits and rules are very different.
4. **Matching Contributions**— Employer matches and pays a portion of employee’s contributions (up to a set percentage of your salary) into 401K or TSP plan as an incentive. For TSP, agencies match up to 5% of employee’s salary.
5. **Catch-up-Contribution**— Additional retirement contributions to TSP, IRA or other savings that can only be made by employees aged 50 and older. The purpose is to encourage employees to save more aggressively as they approach retirement age.
6. **Early Withdrawal Penalty**— Early withdrawal of retirement contributions (before you reach 59 1/2) a retirement account. Usually an early withdrawal penalty is equal to 10% of the amount withdrawn must be paid.
7. **Vesting**— A legal or regulatory entitlement that allows employee to keep the employer contributions to a retirement account. TSP participants must wait 3 years to be vested in the Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions and associated earnings in their account.
8. **Traditional vs. ROTH Accounts**— Traditional accounts allow employees to make pre-tax contributions to a retirement account and taxes are paid at the time of withdrawal. ROTH accounts require taxes to be paid on money going into the retirement account and then all future withdrawals are tax free. Note that there are income restrictions on ROTH accounts.
9. **Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)** - Most traditional IRAs, 401k, or TSP, require a minimum amount to be withdrawn annually once participant reaches age 72. There is a 50% for failing to withdraw the minimum on time.
10. **Dollar Cost Average (DCA)** - An investment strategy in which investors divide up the total amount to be invested over certain periods of time. The purpose is to reduce the impact of volatility on the price of target investments.



Non-appropriated Fund (NAF) Health Benefits Program (HBP) Open Enrollment

The NAF HBP Open Enrollment period will take place November 1–30, 2021. This is your time to review your current benefits and think about your medical and dental needs for 2022. The pandemic has brought the importance of good health into sharper focus. Your NAF employer is committed to providing comprehensive health benefits to you and your family to help keep you healthy.

Depending on where you live, you will have a few medical plan options to choose from. When you compare the High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) to the Choice POS II plan, you see that you'll pay a 30% lower premium in exchange for a higher deductible. Also keep in mind that the HDHP comes with a tax-favored Health Savings Account (HSA) to help you pay out-of-pocket health care costs. Plus, your NAF employer will make a contribution to your HSA of \$500 (for employee-only coverage) or \$1,000 (for family coverage) at the beginning of the year to get your account started.

To review premium rates, plan details, enrollment instructions, and to find additional information about NAF HBP, visit www.nafhealthplans.com.

The popularity of virtual care continues to gain momentum as people enjoy convenience and safety of not having to see a doctor in person. Aetna members enjoy the convenience of

Teladoc that lets you talk with a doctor by phone or video. They can diagnose, treat, and prescribe medications as needed for non-emergency problems like colds, allergies, infections, headaches, and more. You can connect with a dermatologist or a mental health specialist, as well. The best part? General medical visits with Teladoc are no cost. (Members enrolled in the HDHP must meet their deductible first.) Be sure to register ahead of time so you're all ready when you need it. For more information, visit www.nafhealthplans.com/health-benefits/teladoc.

There's still time to earn 2021 health incentives! Employees and eligible covered family members can each earn up to \$300 in health incentive credits to go toward paying your out-of-pocket health care costs. Earn credits when you complete these healthy actions by the end of the year. The only exception is the biometric/metabolic screening, which needs to be completed by November 30th. Learn more at www.nafhealthplans.com/wellness/health-incentives-program.



2021 Open Enrollment for FSAFEDS, CAA, and ARPA

The 2021 Open Enrollment Season is upon us, meaning it is time to re-evaluate our FSAFEDS elections for the 2022 plan year. In May 2021, in response to legislation and IRS guidance, FSAFEDS announced flexibilities for the 2020 and 2021 plan years to the Health Care Flexible Spending Accounts (HCFsAs), Limited Expense Health Care Flexible Spending Accounts (LEXFSAAs) and the Dependent Care Flexible Spending Accounts (DCFSAAs).

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 (CAA) and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 will provide relief to plan participants HCFSA and LEX HCFSA who enroll in the 2022 plan year. If plan participants re-enroll during the open enrollment period, they can carry over any amount in their 2021 accounts for the HCFSA and the LEX HCFSA, beyond the five hundred and fifty dollars. However, if the participant does not make a positive election during this open enrollment season they will not have access to the 2020 carryover funds.

Employees who take advantage of the relief provisions provided for 2021 DCFSA plan year have the ability to extend the grace period under the CAA/ARPA through December 31, 2022. The carry over is automatic and no action is required by participants.

Now is the time to with your healthcare and dependent care providers to project what your 2022 FSAFEDS eligible expenses will be, in preparation for Open Season 2021.

“If plan participants reenroll during the open enrollment period, they can carry over any amount in their 2021 accounts.”



Telework vs Remote Work

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) had released [additional guidance](#) addressing reentry and post-reentry personnel policies. OPM expects agencies to take the lessons learned through the COVID-19 response to make changes to existing personnel policies. Although some employees may desire to return to the office, OPM wishes agencies to consider making temporary exceptions to the permanent policy.

The existing telework policy, DoD Instruction 1035.01, is undergoing rewrites that incorporate OPM's new guidance for telework and remote work. Most employees know that telework is an alternate work arrangement where an employee performs officially assigned duties from an approved alternate worksite, but must report to their regular workplace at least 2 times per pay period. However, there was no official definition of remote work until now. Similar to telework, remote work is an alternate work arrangement where an employee performs officially assigned duties from an approved alternate worksite, but there is no expectations for employees to report to the official worksite on a regular basis.

As the COVID-19 response has shown, DoD Components can leverage both types of agreements to meet mission requirements. Based upon the success of telework, some managers may wish to consider remote work as a flexibility option for their organizations. A key consideration is whether the assigned employee can perform independently and the amount of work that can be performed (e.g. 10% to 80%) away from the official duty site.

Supervisors should contact their component Telework Coordinator for component specific guidance. Component representatives requiring additional information should contact DCPAS Work-Life Team at dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.dod-worklife@mail.mil.



Deciding When to Start Social Security Benefits

Suppose you are a FERS annuitant who has retired and are currently receiving a FERS supplement which ceases at age 62, when will you choose to begin your Social Security benefit? Some annuitants begin as soon as their FERS supplement ends at age 62. However, is that feasible? Social Security benefits are usually when a recipient has not reached the full retirement age according to the Social Security Administration. The age you begin receiving your social security can affect the amount of your monthly benefit for a lifetime.

In 1982, Congress passed a law raising the full benefit age due to an increase in the mortality rate of United States Citizens. The law raised the full retirement age for people born in 1938 or later. The retirement age gradually increased by a few months every birth year until it reached age 67 for those who were born in 1960 or later. Your full retirement age is calculated using your birth year. For information regarding the Social Security retirement age, visit www.ssa.gov.

The actual amount you receive each month depends on when you start receiving benefits. For example, if you were born in 1959 and turn age 62 in 2021. According to Social Security, your full retirement age is 66 and 10 months. If you begin benefits at age 62, your monthly benefit is \$708. You will receive an annual cost-of-living adjustments and may receive higher benefits by delaying receipt of benefits until age 70, when your monthly benefit would be \$1,253.

An annuitant can choose to receive their benefit as early as age 62, but doing so may result in a reduction of as much as 30 percent. If the annuitant waits until age 70, he/she will receive a larger monthly benefit.

“You will get annual cost-of-living adjustments and may receive higher benefits by delaying receipt of benefits until age 70.”



Open Season 2021: What You Need to Know

Open season is here, and shopping for insurance during a global pandemic may be as important as ever. You may pay more or less depending on the plan you choose, but review your options. Ask yourself: Are there any services you need that aren't covered? How much will you pay for prescription drugs? For the most part, your enrollment in FEHB and/or FEDVIP will continue automatically with little to no interruptions. You will be subjected to changes in premiums, benefits, and service areas. This is also the time to review your Flexible Spending Account (FSA) options. FSA is primarily used to cover out-of-pocket expenses (health and daycare expenses). If you are thinking about making a change or a new election, now is the time to act. This year's open season runs from November 8, 2021 through December 13, 2021. This open season is for the 2022 plan year of federal benefit programs.

For additional information please refer to:

<https://www.depas.osd.mil/policy/benefits/federalbenefitsopenseason>.



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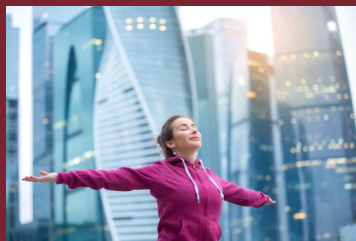
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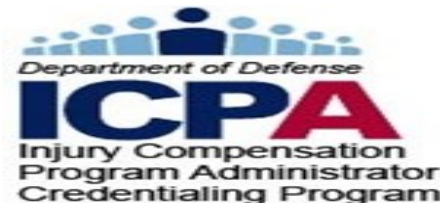


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The Credentialing Corner

DoD Employee Benefits Advisor & Injury Compensation Credentialing Program

Although the training season is ending for the year, we are still offering remote proctoring for Level I, II, III and Recertification EBA Exams, as well as for the Level I ICPA Exam. For those who have successfully completed the corresponding courses and passed the post-test or are up for recertification, please visit our exam scheduler link below to schedule your exam.

<https://credentialingexamrequest.as.me/>

DoD Employee Benefits Advisor Credentialing Prep Session

The next Prep Session being offered by the DCPAS Benefits Credentialing team will be October 27, 2021, from 14:00 to 15:30. The session will be held using Microsoft Teams. The topic being covered is Survivor Benefits. Reserve your seat as soon as possible as they fill up quickly.

To register or to get additional information on the Credentialing Prep Session, or for any ICPA or EBA related questions, please send an email to the Credentialing Team at dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.mbx.dod-bwnp-credentialing@mail.mil.



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