# April 2021 HBR Update

COVID-19 Update for Employees

The COVID-19 vaccination is the best shot at stopping COVID-19! Remember: If you have a spot, take your shot. A tested, safe and effective vaccine is available to all who want it, and it's free! To learn more about the vaccine, visit Find a Spot to Take Your Shot. For more on your State Health Plan COVID-19 benefits, visit the Plan's COVID page.
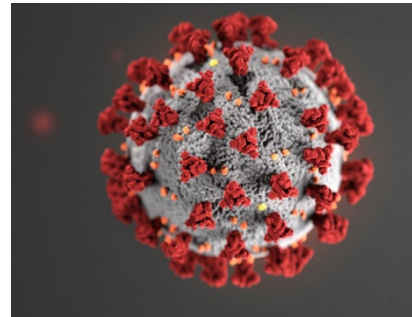
The State Health Plan has been waiving the cost of treatment (medical only) for members diagnosed with COVID-19, including associated deductibles, copayments and coinsurance.

The State Health Plan has decided to extend the waiver until June 30, 2021.

The State Health Plan is dedicated to assisting our members through this global pandemic and is encouraged by continued improvement in vaccine availability.

Thank you for your support as you continue to educate your employees regarding this important information.

2022 Tobacco Credit and Cessation Requirements
A Look Back

Through the years, the State Health Plan has tried several different approaches for members to complete the tobacco cessation counseling session.

- For the first couple of years, the Plan utilized QuitlineNC through the Department of Public Health. Members were given from the start of Open Enrollment through the end of the year to complete the program. While the services were convenient, many members signed up for the wrong program and were frustrated to learn they had not earned the credit. Members also got confused about the requirements for both the subscriber and the spouse.
- The first modification the Plan made was to remove the spouse from the attestation and cessation requirement. The second improvement was to expand the number of QuitlineNC programs eligible to earn the credit, but member frustration continued.

CVS MinuteClinic

The Plan followed that up by moving to the CVS MinuteClinic option. As with the initial versions of the program, subscribers had from the start of Open Enrollment until the end of the year to complete the program and keep the tobacco credit. Because CVS MinuteClinic is not located in all 100 counties of North Carolina nor open 24/7, members were unhappy about access limitations.

The other issue was the timing of the credit removal. By giving subscribers until the end of the year to complete the tobacco cessation program to keep the tobacco credit, the Plan had to wait on a final report from the tobacco cessation vendor before determining who did not meet the criteria and therefore should have the credit removed. That delayed the removal of the credit and many members were negatively impacted when two to three months of tobacco surcharge were deducted at one time.

Expansion to Primary Care Providers

To address the timing and access issues, last year, the Plan opened the tobacco cessation program window and provider options.

- Members had between July 1, 2020, and November 30, 2020, to complete the program and could complete the tobacco cessation

counseling session with their Primary Care Provider or CVS MinuteClinic. The Plan used claims data to determine who completed the program.

- While the access issue was much improved, using claims data to determine program completion was more challenging than expected. Additionally, because of COVID-19, many services were moving to virtual which was helpful in some regards, but because virtual primary care visits were new, they were not without problems.
- What we learned is that many providers simply do not bill for these services when they are done in conjunction with other services such as a preventive visit. If they don't bill for the service, the Plan has no way of validating completion.

<u>What's Next?</u>

Opening the tobacco cessation visits to Primary Care Providers and changing the window for completing the tobacco cessation sessions was successful.

- This year, the Plan will focus more on the validation. The Plan will continue to use claims data to validate the sessions (the Plan validated more than 80% of the cessation visits via claims data). But instead of waiting until the first of February to pull the report of tobacco cessation claims, that will be done towards the end of January.
- The Plan will not begin removing the credits until we have given employees about a week to upload documents to prove they earned the credit if the Plan has no claim for validation.
- The Plan will notify each employing unit about which, if any, employees will have their credit removed unless documentation is uploaded. Members who want to upload their documents as soon as they complete their session are also welcomed to do that.

Important Reminder on Employment Terminations

Please make sure you are terminating all employees timely. Even if they do not currently have State Health Plan benefits, their record needs to be terminated in eBenefits. The Plan has found a large number of members that have an active record in both the Retirement Systems Group and an employing unit group. Members who are eligible under an active employing unit are not eligible for health benefits under the Retirement Systems Group.

Please run your employee census report in Benefitfocus (Data and Reporting, Standard Reports, Census Employee Census Export) to get a list of all

employees who have an active shell with your group. Please be sure to terminate anyone on this report who is not an employee.

If the member does not have current benefits, you should term them as of their true termination date.

If the member does have current benefits, the farthest retro you will be able to term them is 30 days. For more information, see the Plan's guidelines for employee terminations.

Reminder: Encourage Your Employees to Keep Their Contact Information Current!

It is important that the State Health Plan has updated contact information so we can communicate with employees on a regular basis about their health plan benefits. It is critical that they have a valid address, phone number and email address in the Plan's enrollment system, eBenefits, to ensure they are receiving important health plan information in order for them to maximize their benefits all year long.
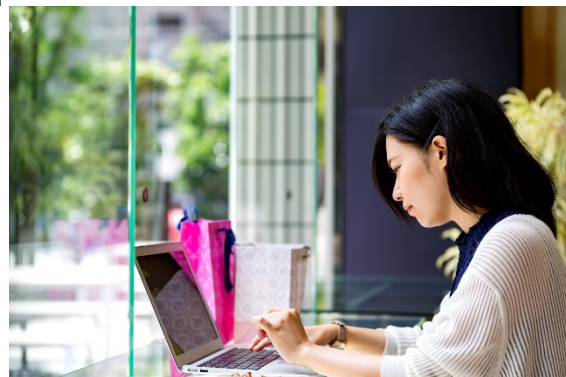
Please encourage your employees to take time to make sure their address is updated, particularly if they have recently moved. They can easily access eBenefits from the State Health Plan's website at www.shpnc.org and click eBenefits at the top of the page.

Here is how to remind your employees to update their information!

Employees of state agencies need to log into BEACON to update their address **AND** log into eBenefits to update their email and phone number. It is necessary to update this information in **BOTH** places.

Employees of groups with payroll interfaces with eBenefits need to keep their demographic information updated with their employer so it sends to eBenefits on a timely basis. This means your employees can not update their information in eBenefits, employing units will have to update it.

Employees of groups who enter their data manually need to update their demographic information directly into eBenefits.

Any Employees Having Babies?

The State Health Plan has seen an increase in cases where employees are not adding newborns within 30 days of their birth, which ultimately can cause a financial hardship when the baby is added retroactively and multiple months of premiums are deducted. If you are aware of employees having a baby, please educate them on this process. The Plan developed a flier for you to either post on your intranet sites or send to specific employees.

Click here to view the flier →

Next HBR Monthly Webinar
April 21, 2021 - 10am

Click to Register! >

This Month's Healthy Recipe

This Month's Wellness Tip

Sheet-Pan Salmon with Sweet Potatoes & Broccoli

Benefits of Physical Activity

Get the Recipe! >

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