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***Correspondence Memorandum***

**Date:** October 22, 2021

**To:** Group Insurance Board

**From:** Dan Hayes, Supervising Attorney  
 Liz Doss-Anderson, Ombudsperson  
 Mary Richardson, Ombudsperson  
 Office of Legal Services

**Subject:** Ombudsperson Services Member Education and Outreach Report

**This memo is for informational purposes only. No Board Action is required.**

The goal of Ombudsperson Services (OS) is to provide Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) members with the highest level of customer service related to benefits administered by the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF). In addition, Ombudsperson Services staff provides recommendations to various ETF divisions and offices based on day-to-day interactions with members, employers, health plans, and third-party administrators. These recommendations are based on issues these stakeholders identify, as well as any benefit program area in need of clarification or continuing education.


OS informs the Group Insurance Board (Board) about its activities via two annual reports, the Quality Assurance Activity Report, presented in February, and the Education and Outreach Report, presented in November. These reports supplement the Semi-Annual and Annual Case Reports and Annual Health Plan Grievance & Independent Review Report that OS provides the Board.

As with last year, OS focused on issues and initiatives that would help members understand their benefits and services available from their health plan, the Pharmacy Benefit Manager and our supplemental plans.

**Examples of Ombudsperson Services Education and Outreach Efforts  
 November 2020 – October 2021:**

- Actively participated in ETF’s Member Communication and Education Committee meetings, which met year-round to work on three areas: printed materials, e-learnings, and website enhancements. The work accomplished by this team provides our members with many options for clear, easily obtained information.

Reviewed and approved by John Voelker, Secretary  
 Electronically Signed 11/03/2021



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Although it can lead to fewer contacts for general questions, the availability of information has also increased the complexity of the problems and questions OS encounters. Staff is also involved in the It's Your Choice (IYC) Open Enrollment Planning meetings. During open enrollment, staff did not participate in the online benefit fairs but remained a resource to assist in explaining current benefits as well as upcoming changes and escalated issues.

- Helped members understand various aspects of their health insurance, including coordination of benefits, prior authorization requirements, dental coverage, as well as grievances, appeals, and external review options. A part of our mission is using the initial complaint resolution as an opportunity to educate our members so they can avoid problems in the future.
- Worked with Office of Strategic Health Policy (OSHP) and the Office of Communications (OC) to ensure the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and member benefits remained available throughout the year via our website and member materials such as the 2022 IYC Decision Guides. Reviewed material for concise information to improve member understanding of benefits related to COVID-19 and whether health plan or Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) was responsible for coverage.
- Worked with a health plan to develop a comprehensive informational piece on vaccine coverage under a health plan vs. the Pharmacy Benefit Manager. Depending on Medicare status, the member may be required to utilize the Pharmacy Benefit Manager and go to a pharmacy while active employees have the option of using a pharmacy or their medical provider for vaccinations.
- Participated in the Benefits Mentor (replacement for ALEX) implementation project plan. Participated in user testing of new tool to ensure that Benefit's Mentor was ready for members during IYC Open Enrollment in October 2021.
- Provided feedback on the ConnectYourCare (CYC) Implementation in 2021 via the annual Lessons Learned meeting. Issues brought to their attention included providing more links on the ETF web site for the CYC/Optum login page, more communication regarding the substantiation process, and requested grievance statistics for plan year 2021.
- Worked with OC's webmaster to improve search results for "Certificate of Coverage" for state employees and retirees, our largest memberships.
- Article on ombudsperson services and how to access our services was included in the September 2021 WRS News newsletter for both active and retired members.

- Lectured at the Center for Patient Partnerships at UW-Madison Law School. Topics of discussion for the class of 20 students and two faculty was health care purchasing in the public sector, member advocacy in the current environment, and the ETF administrative review process.
- Worked with various divisions within ETF to develop an outreach plan for the City of Madison's soon-to- retire employees. Due to the pandemic, the City of Madison did not have adequate staff to meet their employee's needs for retirement education.
- Developed educational materials on HDHPs and HSAs for the Board on Aging and Long-Term Care to assist their staff in discussing these programs with any WRS members who may call their assistance line.

### **Looking Ahead**

The 2022 plan year will see several benefit changes, including composite fillings under Uniform Dental Benefits and orthognathic jaw surgery and acupuncture under Uniform Benefits. In addition, continuous glucometer machines will now also be covered by the Pharmacy Benefit Manager. We will monitor plan/PBM administration of these new benefits to ensure members are getting the information they need to access benefits. We will continue to collaborate with other divisions and offices within ETF on projects such as developing eLearning programs and other print and online educational materials for members about how to access their benefits.

Staff will be available at the board meeting to answer any questions.