



Small Businesses May Be Overlooking Health Care Reform Provisions: eHealthInsurance Provides 5 Tips

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MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA, May 10, 2011 (MARKETWIRE via COMTEX) --

Today eHealthInsurance (NASDAQ: EHTH), the leading online source of health insurance for individuals, families and small businesses, published tips for small business owners who may not be taking full advantage of benefits provided by health care reform legislation.

While the cost of providing group health insurance for employees has increased substantially over the past decade(1), the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in 2010 has opened new opportunities for small businesses. Many of today's small employers are aware of the new tax credits available when they provide health insurance for their employees, but eHealthInsurance has found(2) that many of today's small business owners are not taking advantage of other available provisions.

The following tips are specifically addressed to small business owners who currently provide employee health insurance coverage, and who are concerned about costs and curious about the special opportunities health care reform may provide them.

Tips for Small Business Health Insurance Re-shoppers

TIP #1 -- Don't leave benefits on the table -- If you haven't re-shopped group health insurance plans recently, you may not know about the improved benefits available on all new employer-based health plans. Group health insurance policies purchased after September 23, 2010 now include free preventive care screenings; they also do away with lifetime limits for most covered medical services.

If your current group health insurance plan (i.e. a "grandfathered" plan) doesn't provide these sorts of benefits, it may be time to take another look at your options. You may find comparably priced plans on the market that offer better coverage.

TIP #2 -- Talk with your employees -- If you're finding it hard to afford your current health insurance plan, talk to your employees before you start to shop for a new one. If they're educated about the new benefits resulting from health care reform, they may be more open to changes in their current coverage, such as increased cost-sharing or the adoption of high-deductible plans and Health Savings Accounts.

In some states, it is illegal to ask specific questions about an employee's health status. So, to safely help yourself understand their coverage preferences, create an anonymous survey for your employees to fill out. Ask them to identify the kinds of benefits they most value. It may be, for instance, that they don't value dental coverage as much as prescription drug coverage. By making the survey anonymous, you can stay on the right side of privacy considerations and get a more honest account of what's important to your employees.

TIP #3 -- Encourage employee wellness -- Wellness is always a good strategy because small group health insurance policies cost less when you have a healthy group. Encourage employees to exercise at lunch and stock your break room with healthier snacks. Encourage preventive medical care too. Many small employers don't have human resources departments, but there are online resources available that advise people when to get scheduled screenings and check-ups.

If you've already purchased a post-reform health plan with improved coverage, encourage your employees to take advantage of the preventive screening benefits that are now available with no out-of-pocket cost. Preventive screenings and regular checkups can go a long way towards helping you ensure a healthy workforce and minimizing sick days in the future.

TIP #4 -- Shop and re-shop -- Whether or not you're currently struggling under the cost of group health insurance, it can pay to shop around and explore new options. Re-shopping at least once every year or two (in the same way you might for automobile insurance) can help you save money and feel confident you're getting the most out of your health insurance dollars.

Work with a licensed health insurance agent like eHealthInsurance to make sure you have the right plan for your needs and budget. An agent can highlight special considerations, answer questions, help you manage the enrollment process, and serve as your advocate with the insurance company. It doesn't cost anything extra to work with a licensed agent.

TIP #5 -- Don't forget those tax credits! -- Remember that for the 2010-2013 tax years small businesses with fewer than 25 full-time employees (or an equivalent number of part-time employees) and average annual wages of \$50,000 or less may qualify for tax credits if they provide group health insurance and pay at least 50% of employee monthly premiums. Businesses that qualify for the maximum credit (i.e. those with fewer than 10 employees and average wages of \$25,000 or less) will receive a tax credit equivalent to 35% of the amount paid toward employee health insurance premiums. There are similar credits available for non-profit organizations too. Talk to your accountant to learn more.

Additional Resources:

- Check out the 'Health Insurance for Entrepreneurs' buyer's guide, specially designed for small business owners and self-employed persons.
- Self-employed persons and small business owners interested in understanding their group health insurance options are also encouraged to contact eHealthInsurance by phone at 1-877-456-6670.

NOTES:

(1) For analysis of these trends, see the Kaiser Family Foundation's Employer Health Benefits 2010 Annual Survey: <http://ehbs.kff.org/>.

(2) Through contacts made in the eHealthInsurance customer care center where licensed small business health insurance agents regularly work with small business owners exploring their health insurance options.

About eHealth eHealth, Inc. (NASDAQ: EHTH) is the parent company of eHealthInsurance, the nation's leading online source of health insurance for individuals, families and small businesses. Through the company's website, www.eHealthInsurance.com, consumers can get quotes from leading health insurance carriers, compare plans side by side, and apply for and purchase health insurance. eHealthInsurance offers thousands of individual, family and small business health plans underwritten by more than 180 of the nation's leading health insurance companies. eHealthInsurance is licensed to sell health insurance in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, making it the ideal model of a successful, high-functioning health insurance exchange. Through the company's eHealthTechnology solution (www.eHealthTechnology.com), eHealth is also a leading provider of health insurance exchange technology. eHealthTechnology's exchange platform provides a suite of hosted e-commerce solutions that enable health plan providers, resellers and government entities to market and distribute products online. eHealth, Inc. also provides powerful online and pharmacy-based tools to help seniors navigate Medicare health insurance options, choose the right plan and enroll in select plans online through its wholly-owned subsidiary, PlanPrescriber.com (www.planprescriber.com) and through its Medicare website www.eHealthMedicare.com.

For more health insurance news and information, visit the eHealthInsurance consumer blog: Get Smart -- Get Covered.

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