

Advertisement Microsoft Is your business **people ready?** FIND OUT ▶



washingtonpost.com > Columns

Print This Article
E-Mail This Article
Advertisement
RSS News Feeds
Top News
What is RSS? | All RSS Feeds

Advertisement
Federal Diary
Stephen Barr, Columnist
Federal Page Headlines | Politics E-Mail | XML RSS | Live Politics Q & A

Advertisement
today in slate
News & Politics
Election
Scorecard:
The Latest
Polls on the
Governors'
Races

Workers to Get Enhanced Dental and Vision Insurance

By [Stephen Barr](#)
Wednesday, September 6, 2006; Page D04

After two years of planning and evaluation, enhanced insurance coverage for bad teeth and weak eyes will be offered to federal employees, retirees and their dependents this fall through contracts awarded to 10 companies.

A new dental and vision program, which becomes effective Dec. 31, will accept enrollments from Nov. 13 through Dec. 11, the period also set aside for federal employees and retirees to choose their health insurance options for next year.

The dental-vision program is eagerly awaited by many federal employees. Testimony at congressional hearings portrayed the government's dental and vision coverage as meager, with reimbursement levels and annual maximum benefits significantly below those provided by private-

Advertisement
Featured Advertiser Links

Advertisement
\$999 Dell™ Home Inspiron™ Notebook with Intel® Core™ 2 Duo CPU. Offer ends 9/6. Click for Details

Advertisement

sector employers.

About 8 million federal employees, retirees and family members will be eligible to enroll for dental or vision benefits or both. Employees will be able to use pretax dollars to pay for their premiums. The government, which covers about 70 percent of the cost of health insurance premiums, will not pick up any of the cost of the dental-vision premiums under the 2004 law that created the new program.

Details about the program's benefits coverage and costs will be announced in coming weeks by the Office of Personnel Management, which administers the program.

Congressional aides have said the dental benefits could provide a broad range of coverage, including oral and maxillofacial surgery and orthodontics. The vision benefits could cover preventive care and eyewear, for example.

Dental benefits will be offered by Aetna Life Insurance Co., Government Employees Hospital Association Inc., MetLife Inc., United Concordia Cos., Group Health Inc., CompBenefits Corp. and Triple-S Inc., the OPM announced last week.

Vision benefits will be available through the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, Spectera Inc., and the Vision Service Plan, the OPM said.

These 10 companies are the same that the OPM had announced as the program's vendors in May. That selection triggered a protest by Blue Cross, which also wanted a dental contract, and prompted OPM officials to reassess the bids they had received. In the reassessment, Blue Cross once again fell short in that bidding, OPM officials said.

Jackie Fishman, a spokeswoman for Blue Cross, said the association "was not invited by OPM to enter into final contract negotiations to offer a dental product" and was disappointed by the OPM's decision. But Blue Cross "is delighted" by its selection to offer vision benefits, she said.

The Government Employees Hospital Association, known as GEHA, and the

XML Syndicate/Subscribe
About This Column
<ul style="list-style-type: none">XML Sign Up for RSS FeedFederal Diary ArchiveHow RSS Works
Save & Share
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Tag This ArticleSaving options

Vision Service Plan, or VSP, offered some details yesterday on how they will structure the new benefits.

GEHA said its dental plan will not have waiting periods, except for orthodontia, and no deductibles. Enrollees will be able to choose any dentist and can save money by going to an in-network dentist, GEHA said. GEHA will offer a high option and a standard option, and premiums will vary by geographic area, it said.

"Federal employees have been asking for additional dental coverage" *Richard Miles* , GEHA president, said in a statement. "This new program is an answer to that need."

The VSP said it also will offer two levels of coverage, a standard option and a high option. Both options will provide a yearly comprehensive eye exam and offer coverage for glasses or contact lenses. Enrollees will be able to use a network of more than 32,000 doctors.

"We are delighted by the federal government's decision and commitment to provide quality eye care to federal employees and retirees," *Rob Lynch* , VSP's president, said.

[Print This Article](#) [Email This Article](#) [RSS Feed](#)

Advertisement 

© 2006 The Washington Post Company


Ads by Google

[Blue Cross of California](#)
Get Instant Quotes and Apply Online Priority processing
www.plansforhealth.com

[Private Health Insurance](#)
We Offer Affordable Solutions For Small Businesses & Self-Employed
www.InsInfo.com

[Affordable Health Care](#)
\$119.95 per Mo, Hospitals, Doctors \$10 Drug Card, Dental, Vision, More
goodhealthplan.com

SEARCH:

News Web results by 

NEWS | OPINIONS | SPORTS | ARTS & LIVING Discussions | Photos & Video | City Guide CLASSIFIEDS | JOBS | CARS | REAL ESTATE

washingtonpost.com: [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Make Us Your Homepage](#) | [mywashingtonpost.com](#) | [Work at washingtonpost.com](#)
The Washington Post: [Subscribe](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Electronic Edition](#) | [Online Photo Store](#) | [The Washington Post Store](#) | [About The Post](#)
The Washington Post Company: [Information and Other Post Co. Websites](#)

© Copyright 1996- 2006 The Washington Post Company | [User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#) | [Rights and Permissions](#)