



PAYROLL OFFICE LETTER

U. S. Office of Personnel Management

Number: P-98-10

Date: November 2, 1998

Subject: 1999 OPEN SEASON INFORMATION

This letter provides information to be used by agency payroll offices for the upcoming Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program open season.

OFFICIAL EMPLOYEE WITHHOLDING AND AGENCY CONTRIBUTION RATES FOR 1999 (EXHIBIT A);

The 1999 premium rates are effective with the **first full pay period beginning after December 31, 1998**. These are the official rates and the only ones to be used for withholdings and contributions for pay periods beginning after December 31, 1998. Please update your systems accordingly.

The rates for 1999 are available in three media:

- 1) A printed copy of the rates is included with this letter as **EXHIBIT A**.
- 2) An electronic copy of the rates is enclosed on a 3.5" diskette. It contains both ASCII and dBaseIII file formats.
- 3) Our web site has the rates posted for download at www.opm.gov/asd. Look for Payroll Office Letter 98-10.

SPECIAL NOTE: The web version of this Payroll Office Letter does not contain Exhibits A and B. To obtain copies of these exhibits or the rates diskette, please contact the Financial Management Division on (202) 606-0606.

SIGNIFICANT PLAN CHANGES FOR 1999 OUTLINED IN BAL 98-411;

Please refer to Benefits Administration Letter 98-411 for lists of significant events affecting certain plans during open season. It identifies plans that dropped out of or were added to the FEHB for 1999, those with name changes, others that merged or consolidated service areas, etc. We suggest that you obtain a copy of BAL 98-411 by downloading it from <http://www.opm.gov/asd>, or getting it from the Health Benefits Officer at your agency.

Also, please be sure to specifically reference BALs 98-416 and 98-417, which provide the names of three plans that terminated their participation in the FEHB, subsequent to the issuance of BAL 98-411 on significant plan changes.

ADDRESSES FOR HEALTH PLANS (EXHIBIT B);

Please refer to Benefits Administration Letters in the 400 Series (e.g. BAL 98-401, BAL 98-402, etc.) which contain additional information about the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program and the current open season.

TIMELY PROCESSING OF ENROLLMENT DOCUMENTS

Several carriers participating in the FEHB Program have expressed difficulty in reconciling their enrollment records with agency payroll offices. The principal vehicle upon which the carriers rely to maintain an accurate roster is the Health Benefits Registration Form (SF2809). Section S19-2 of the FEHB Handbook for Personnel and Payroll Offices requires that the SF2809 be processed in a timely manner and not accumulated by agencies for more than one week before forwarding to the carriers. In addition, it is critical that agencies ensure that the "losing" and "gaining" carriers receive timely copies of the SF2809. Your accurate and timely processing of SF2809's during the open season will help decrease the number of enrollment discrepancies encountered during the reconciliation process.

Your compliance with our request for timely processing of enrollment documents would be made even more important as a consequence of regulations that are being considered. These regulations would allow FEHB carriers to disenroll enrollees for whom they are unable to verify enrollment status. In other words, if an employee or their employing agency fails to provide sufficient documentation evidencing the employee's enrollment status within a stipulated time frame, the FEHB carrier may terminate that enrollee's insurance coverage. We will provide information on this matter as circumstances warrant.

PAYROLL OFFICE ADDRESSES

We used the address we have on file for your payroll office to mail this letter. If this address is incorrect or needs updating, please notify us promptly by writing to:

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Retirement and Insurance Group
Financial Management Division, Room 3H35
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20415-3450**

INQUIRIES

Each agency is required to designate a Health Benefits Officer who functions as our point of contact with the agency and acts as spokesperson for the agency on health benefits matters. We request that agencies involve their Health Benefits Officer in any matter they would like to bring to our attention. If you have a matter related to the financial administration of the health benefits program which you would like to discuss with us, please contact our Financial Management Division on (202) 606-0606 or via email, **finance@opm.gov**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert A. Yuran". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert A. Yuran, Chief
Financial Policy Staff
Retirement and Insurance Service

Enclosures (3)