

ACE Newsletter

Medicare Advantage Plan to be considered by ETF

By Sally Drew

The Association of Career Employees (ACE) has been following the Department of Employee Trust Funds' (ETF) efforts to explore incorporating Medicare Advantage Plans into the health insurance choices offered to state employees and retirees. The Group Insurance Board (GIB) approved the development and issuance of a Request for Proposals for Medicare Advantage Plans in May 2017. ETF plans to develop a survey of Medicare and pre-Medicare retirees about benefit and design features. The next GIB meeting is scheduled for August 30, 2017.

ACE recently wrote to ETF concerning this project. ACE's letter is below.

"The Association of Career Employee Board has read your April 28, 2017 memo concerning Medicare Advantage Plans with interest and would like to make a few comments.

We appreciate that ETF plans to conduct a survey of Medicare and pre-Medicare retirees in advance of preparing the RFP. The memo does not say how large the poll sampling will be, but we hope it will be large enough in size to reach people throughout the state. ACE Board members would be willing to assist with the survey by reviewing survey questions, pretesting the survey or publicizing the survey. We also wonder if it might be possible to add several focus groups to the process as it may be possible to get a more complete picture of how people look at the issues in a face-to-face group.

The IYC Medicare plan appears to work well and we would like to see that option remains available. As you note, some families have both Medicare and non-Medicare members and may prefer to remain with the same coverage. Also, some retirees may prefer remaining with a state plan that assures original/traditional Medicare coverage and prefer not to work with a private insurer overseen by CMS, but not operated by CMS. Some employees

may also like working with non-profit HMO's where they can vote for the board and take some part in decision-making.

In addition it is critical that Medicare Advantage plans (or at least one plan available statewide) offer the uniform benefit package in order to make comparisons on services and costs and should also offer the benefits provided under traditional Medicare. Some differences are discussed in the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance, *Guide to Health Insurance for People with Medicare*. If a state-contracted plan leaves the market, it is critical that the retirees who chose that plan are protected.

It is also critical that employees be able to use the sick leave conversion option regardless of what Medicare coverage option are available.

It would be desirable to have a member of the Wisconsin Coalition of Annuity included as a reviewer for the Medical Advantage Plans RFP proposal review. “

ETF responded on July 18, 2017 and the response, signed by Robert Conlin is below.

“Thank you for your letter outlining your interest and suggestions regarding the upcoming Medicare Advantage Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

Regarding the survey the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) will be conducting. ETF is reaching out to the University of Wisconsin Survey Center to seek assistance reviewing the survey and providing feedback, making recommendations about the sample size needed to obtain an accurately representative result, and the possibility of administering the survey and compiling the results.

As ETF's Director of Communications –Mark Lamkins – notes in his presentation to the Wisconsin Coalition of Annuity (WCOA) on June 19, ETF will be seeking feedback on the draft survey and accompanying letter and materials from the WCOA volunteers. We plan to send this information to the volunteers in August. This feedback will be incorporated before the survey is finalized.

ETF will also publicly communicate the survey launch so that groups like the WCOA can share information with their members about the survey.

We appreciate your feedback about the plan options. One of the goals of the survey is to determine what future changes our retirees might like to see. ETF periodically evaluates coverage options as new products become available that may provide higher value to our members. ETF has not had any recent discussions about changing the allowable uses of sick leave credits.

We will consider the request to add a retiree representative on the RFP evaluation committee. ETF staff will be in touch with you on this topic.

As always, we are happy to come and talk with the WCOA at any future meetings about these topics. Thanks again for your feedback and willingness to collaborate.