

National
Health
access



Press Kit

Opening the door to health care



Press Release

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First Wave of Large Employers Opens the Door To Affordable Health Insurance For More Than 1 Million Workers

National Health Access launches, a first-of-a-kind program that enables temporary, seasonal, and part-time workers, as well as independent contractors to receive access to new health care options

WASHINGTON, DC— In a nationally coordinated effort to address the sizable number of uninsured working Americans, several of the country's largest employers have joined together to launch National Health Access (NHA), a program that will provide an estimated 1.25 million workers and their dependents the opportunity to obtain affordable health care coverage during this initial wave. HR Policy Association, a nonprofit organization of senior human resources executives of Fortune 500 companies, brought together large companies with major health insurers to sponsor NHA's array of low cost health insurance options for workers without access to employer-provided coverage.

NHA companies, including Avon Products, Inc., IBM, Sears, General Electric, EMC, and Federal-Mogul are participating in the first wave to begin offering or making available six innovative NHA program choices over the next several months. The offerings available to their employees and independent contractors include discount programs, as well as a variety of health insurance options including major medical coverage. Covered services may include immunizations, checkups, wellness, inpatient/outpatient care, prescription drugs, mental health care, dental care, and other services depending on the plan level.

"The harsh reality is that millions of people are without health insurance," said J. Randall MacDonald, senior vice president, human resources for IBM, and chairman of HR Policy Association's Health Care Policy Roundtable. "Because our health care system is primarily employment-based, it makes sense for large employers to take collective action to try to come up with innovative, collaborative solutions to this pressing problem."

"As the Company for Women, Avon has a rich history of providing women with earning opportunities that allow them to plan their futures," said Maria Peninger, regional vice president, sales for Avon. "We are delighted to be able to offer our Representatives access to health care coverage and provide yet another way to ensure their health and well-being."

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“While NHA is not a cure-all, we’re proud to be a part of this combined effort by employers and health insurers to develop opportunities for the uninsured to gain coverage,” said Mike McCallister, president and chief executive officer of Humana Inc.

“NHA is a creative undertaking involving major employers, three major health insurers – UnitedHealth Group, Humana and CIGNA HealthCare – and Hewitt Associates as administrator,” said Jeff McGuinness, president of HR Policy Association. “Broad market reforms are necessary to reduce spiraling health costs and to ultimately begin offering millions of uninsured workers with access to health care benefits that they need and can afford.”

By pooling eligible workers from large businesses, companies are using their purchasing power to get insurance rates and terms that are more favorable than what workers would obtain individually. Those who are ineligible for company-subsidized plans can enroll in the NHA program through participating companies. This includes independent contractors, part-time, temporary and seasonal employees, plus spouses and dependents.

“UnitedHealth Group has long supported collaboration among businesses, government, health care providers and health insurers to make health care more affordable and accessible,” said Dawn Owens, president of Uniprise Strategic Solutions. “This is a significant step forward in ensuring all consumers have access to the care they need.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 45 million Americans had no health insurance coverage in 2004. While most Americans obtain health insurance benefits through employers, being employed does not guarantee coverage. Working families with moderate incomes are increasingly joining the ranks of the uninsured because they lack affordable health insurance options or can’t get through barriers to access coverage.

Eligible workers have begun receiving details on the program and enrollment information from participating companies and health insurers in the mail.

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HR Policy Association, established in 1957, represents the senior human resource executives of more than 250 of America’s largest employers. Its members are a cross-section of large employers – both heavy and light manufacturing, auto companies and suppliers, the nation’s largest hi-tech companies, financial institutions, retailers, service providers, defense contractors, and energy companies, as well as pharmaceutical companies, health insurers, providers, and health care institutions.

National Health Access

Program Overview

Launched in September 2005, National Health Access (NHA) is an initiative driven by the nation's largest employers to improve health care coverage for seasonal, temporary, and part-time workers who may not previously have had access to health insurance. HR Policy Association, a non-profit organization of senior human executives from Fortune 500 companies, developed the NHA program under the auspices of the Health Care Policy Roundtable. It is the first of its kind effort to give uninsured Americans greater access to health care by leveraging the collective resources of participating companies.

Severe challenges in the health care system—the number of uninsured Americans, unsustainable increases in health care costs, deficiencies in health care quality—gave Association leaders several reasons to create the NHA program. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 45 million Americans were without health insurance in 2004. By designing NHA, participating employers wanted to respond to this serious economic and social concern by providing their workers access to affordable and quality coverage that they deserve and need.

Through a partnership with major health insurers—UnitedHealth Group, Humana, and CIGNA—along with Hewitt Associates as the administrator, NHA provides part-time workers, independent contractors, independent agents, consultants and temporary workers the opportunity to access six levels of coverage, ranging from a discount card (which is not insurance) through major medical service, at affordable rates. Although NHA is not a panacea to the uninsured problem, it is an aggressive and proactive first step towards a solution that ultimately will require action by all stakeholders in the system.

September 2005 is the official launch of the NHA program for a January 2006 effective date. A second rollout of the initiative starts in February 2006 for an April 1 effective date. During this period, as many as 1.25 million people could benefit from NHA offerings, and this number is expected to grow as more companies join.

NHA Advantages

NHA provides—

- the working uninsured better access to appropriate care, preventing them from having to seek primary care through the emergency room;
- those who would otherwise be attempting to purchase insurance in the individual market the advantages of a group policy, such as more stability in premium pricing, easy to use and flexible coverage options, state-of-the-art decision support tools that help participants make important decisions on provider costs and available quality metrics, and deep physician and hospital discounts passed on from those negotiated by leading health insurers;

- uninsured workers with an array of fully insured coverage alternatives, in many cases on a guaranteed issue basis; and
- employers with a turnkey solution that allows them to offer coverage to workers who would not otherwise have access to insurance alternatives.

Major Medical Benefits

UnitedHealth Group, through its Uniprise business (insurance underwritten by United HealthCare Insurance Company) is offering guaranteed issue access to high deductible major medical insurance offerings through group products to participating companies in 15 states. Premiums for Uniprise's products will vary based on individual circumstances. Humana will offer access to major medical insurance through the individual insurance market in an additional 16 states, and CIGNA HealthCare in Arizona. The Humana and CIGNA products will have fewer individual medical underwriting barriers than found in the traditional market.

Scheduled Benefits

Uniprise is offering nationwide, guaranteed issue access to three levels of scheduled benefits for fixed monthly premiums ranging from \$60 to \$150 per month per individual. Benefits include doctor visits, preventive care, outpatient diagnostic services, and prescription coverage with co-pays and annual maximums.

Discount Program

Uniprise is offering nationwide access to its Health Allies discount program, which offers up to 50 percent discounts on a variety of health services, plus access to a 24-hour nurse line. The Health Allies program is not insurance and costs \$6.99 per month.

Administration Services

NHA will be administered by Hewitt Associates, which will handle all enrollment, eligibility, billing and related customer service needs.

National Health Access Questions & Answers

1. Q: There were several news reports about National Health Access beginning in January 2005 and throughout the year, what is new about this program?

A: HR Policy Association (HR Policy), participating companies and health insurers are announcing the official launch of National Health Access. The program is up and running. Beginning September 29, eligible individuals began receiving detailed information, and actually began to enroll.

2. Q: What is HR Policy Association?

A: HR Policy is the nonprofit public policy organization of senior human resources executives of more than 250 of the largest employers in the United States. Its members are a cross-section of large employers – both heavy and light manufacturing, auto companies and suppliers, the nation's largest hi-tech companies, financial institutions, retailers, service providers, defense contractors, and energy companies, as well as pharmaceutical companies, health insurers, providers, and health care institutions. Jeff McGuinness is the president of HR Policy.

3. Q: What is the Health Care Policy Roundtable?

A: HR Policy Association's Healthcare Policy Roundtable (Roundtable), chaired by J. Randall MacDonald, Senior Vice President of Human Resources for IBM, is comprised of human resource executives from HR Policy companies that represent a variety of industries – airline, communications, energy, health insurance, pharmaceuticals, manufacturers, retail, and technology. The Roundtable was formed in response to the soaring costs and disturbing deficiencies in quality, efficiency, and transparency within the U.S. healthcare system. Employers within the Roundtable have led HR Policy's effort to use the collective leverage of its membership to focus on market reform and policy changes within our health care system. This includes looking for ways to improve coverage options for the growing number of uninsured Americans who work for or are affiliated with large companies, but are ineligible for employer subsidized coverage.

4. Q: What is the National Health Access Program?

A: The National Health Access Program is the result of large employers proactively working together to develop solutions to the highly complex social problem of 46 million Americans living without health insurance. Through a partnership with UnitedHealth Group, Humana, CIGNA, and Hewitt Associates acting as administrator, participating companies can offer six levels of coverage, ranging from a discount card through major medical coverage, that address the needs of the different demographic interests among the eligible pool of workers.

5. Q: What companies are participating in the National Health Access Program?

A: There are 17 employers participating in the initial phases, including Avon Products, Inc., EMC, General Electric, IBM, Sears, and Federal-Mogul.

6. Q: Who is eligible for benefits under the National Health Access Program?

A: Part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees, independent contractors, independent agents, consultants, and their spouses and dependents at participating companies are eligible.

7. Q: How many eligible beneficiaries are there?

A: In the first wave of enrollment in the National Health Access Program, approximately 1.25 million individuals and their dependents are eligible.

8. Q: Why should individuals enroll in this program?

A: The offerings of the National Health Access Program benefit employees and independent contractors who enroll by –

- Increasing the number of affordable healthcare insurance products and the subsequent access to stable healthcare available to them and their families
- Making available some options with guarantee issue, meaning that some individuals and their families who are “uninsurable” in the individual market because of past or current medical conditions can get insurance

9. Q: What benefits are available?

A: Benefits will vary by state and by coverage option chosen. Benefits span from discounts to expansive networks of health care providers, to scheduled in-patient and outpatient benefits, including some prescription drug coverage, all the way through major medical coverage.

10. Q: How much does coverage cost a typical participant?

A: Monthly premiums vary depending on the level of coverage offered. For scheduled benefits offered by UnitedHealth Group’s Uniprise business (insurance underwritten by United HealthCare Insurance Company), approximate premiums are as follows:

Level 1 Discounts (access to pre-negotiated discounts) – \$6.99

Level 2 Physician Access (coverage for office visits, dental, prescriptions up to plan maximums) – \$60.00

Level 3 Essential Access (same as Level 3, plus some emergency room and outpatient mental health up to plan maximums) – \$79.00

Level 4 Expanded Access (same as Level 3, plus some coverage for hospital stays and inpatient mental health up to plan maximums) – \$150.00

For major medical coverage, coverage will be offered by CIGNA, Humana, or Uniprise depending on an individual’s location. Premiums vary based on individual circumstances.

11. Q: How do eligible participants enroll in National Health Access?

A: Each participating company will send out comprehensive brochures and other educational materials in various languages where appropriate providing information to their eligible populations on how to enroll. Those interested should contact their human resources office or the organization designated in the literature.

12. Q: Are health insurance products offered through National Health Access portable?

A: Some of the products offered through National Health Access will be portable. However, two of the health insurers offering coverage – Humana and CIGNA – are offering coverage through individual contracts. These contracts would be allowed to continue even if an individual were to terminate their relationship with a participating employer.