



Oregon Nurses Association
Bargaining Unit Newsletter

Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Association of University Registered Nurses (AURN)

June 18, 2018

ONA - AURN Executive Team

President:

Lizzy McPhee, RN
Vascular Access Team

Vice President:

Maria LaVelle, RN
Vascular Access Team

Secretary:

Rachael Mounts RN,
6A PACU/Pre-Surgical

Treasurer:

Harold Fleshman, RN
10 D Epilepsy
Monitoring Unit

Member-at-Large:

Julie Jorgensen, RN
DCH ED

ONA Labor Relations Representatives:

Sarah Thompson
503-293-0011 ext.1320
Thompson@OregonRN.org

Liz Morris
503-293-0011, ext. 1319
Morris@OregonRN.org

Rob Nosse
503-293-0011, ext. 1318
Nosse@OregonRN.org

ONA Oregon Nurses Association
Voice of Oregon Nurses Since 1904

Oregon Nurses Association
18765 SW Boones Ferry Road
Suite 200
Tualatin, OR 97062



Health Care Benefits Changes Contemplated for 2019

Employee health care benefits aren't just important, they are also expensive. Benefits and the changes that occur to them from time to time at OHSU are not something that just happens. Because of our union and our contract, we have a lot of say about what they cost—the premium, the deductible, and out-of-pocket expenses—as well as what they cover.

Employee Benefits Council

At OHSU our input and role in our health care plan design is described in Appendix B of our contract. It starts with the Employee Benefits Council. The council is made up of two representatives appointed by the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA), four representatives appointed by American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and six representatives appointed by the Employer who represent non-union colleagues, medical providers, administration and faculty. Our ONA representatives on the council are Harold Fleshman, the current treasurer of our ONA bargaining unit, and Katy Cooper, a past president of the bargaining unit and the immediate past president of ONA.

This committee makes decisions every year, mostly in consensus about benefit enhancements or changes (sometimes

we let co-pays and out-of-pocket costs increase to keep the premium lower). You can read more about the structure of the committee and how it makes decisions by reviewing the complete Appendix B in our Collective Bargaining Agreement. You can also get a better sense of the work of the committee by reviewing the 2018 benefit guide—a sixty-page document that provides detailed summary of all the different benefits (medical, dental, vision, disability, etc.) and how they work.

This year the committee is contemplating several significant changes that nurses should be aware of as we move forward through the process. These decisions/changes must be decided by September so that they can become part of the benefit design for 2019 and be reflected in the open enrollment period which usually occurs in November and is the time when employees at OHSU can make changes to their benefits, such as switching medical or dental plans.

Plan Design Changes

Last year and the year before, the benefits council agreed to some modest increases in the out-of-pocket maximums and the deductibles. This was done in order to keep premiums lower.

Continued on page 2

Health Care Benefit Changes, continued

OHSU is also asking us to allow the deductible to go as high as \$500 for the individual and \$1000 for the family (currently it is \$300 for the individual and \$900 for the family), as well as allowing the out-of-pocket maximum for tier one to go as high as \$2250 for the individual and \$5900 for the family. (Currently it is \$1650 for the individual and \$3350 for the family). OHSU is also asking us to increase co-pays to see providers and specialists. The possible savings to the plan are estimated around \$3.54 million and \$3.65 million which presumably could be reinvested in something else at OHSU or help to keep premiums low or maybe even improve a benefit elsewhere.

Spousal Surcharge

Many health insurance plans now require an additional amount of premium, a surcharge when you use your insurance plan to cover your spouse when your spouse also works and is eligible for coverage under their own employer-provided health plan. Employers are doing this all over the state to get your spouse off of their plan and have their medical claims (the costs that your spouse might incur) be paid for by their employer.

Currently OHSU does not have a spousal surcharge. They think the lack of one encourages us to enroll our spouses on the OHSU plan for health insurance or dental insurance and OHSU bears the cost of those claims. OHSU has asked the benefits council to consider a \$50 or a \$100 a month surcharge. The \$100 a month surcharge is estimated to save the plan \$2.49 million a year most likely in claims that would be avoided. Yes, some people would pay the charge but the surcharge is not really about collecting more premium, it is intended to encourage you to have your spouse get his or her insurance from their employer not OHSU and thus OHSU saves money in avoided claims costs.

High Deductible Health Plan

Some employers including some health care employers are offering high deductible plans that also include a health savings account (HSA) option where the employer also contributes an amount of money to the HSA account annually. The theory behind high deductible plans is that a limited benefit encourages people to think carefully about whether or when to see a provider or utilize the emergency room and they also allow a person to build up money in their HSA account over time so that when a medical expense comes along they can cover the high deductible and the out-of-pocket expenses with the money in the account.

Some people may prefer this style of benefit. Maybe a young person who is healthy and does not use a lot of medical care who wants to build up an account, or an older worker who wants to accumulate money in an HSA to be able to spend on medical care when they retire. OHSU believes there are employees who would like this option. The deductible would be \$1500 for the individual and \$3000 for the family with a \$3000 out-of-pocket maximum for the individual and a \$6000 out-of-pocket maximum for the family. The Health Savings Account would have an annual contribution from OHSU of \$500 for the individual and \$1000 for the family. OHSU would also offer the ability to purchase additional insurance that would allow a person to cover the cost of a critical illness or hospital stay. There are not anticipated savings for offering this style of benefit. It does not have a significantly lower premium though it would be lower than the OHSU PPO. OHSU is asking to be able to provide the option for employees who may prefer it.

Domestic Partner Coverage

The benefits council was also asked to examine if domestic partner benefits should continue. Ending that style of benefit would save the plan about \$1.12 to \$2.15 million a year most likely in avoided claims. Now that same sex marriage is legal in the United States, employers who had domestic partner benefits for gay or other employees who could not legally marry their partners and have insurance benefits are questioning if this is necessary anymore. It is an interesting question. Should people who now can legally marry be forced to marry if they want their significant other to have their employer's health insurance. What about "straight" couples who always had the option to marry? Removing this benefit design would force them to marry if they wanted to keep having OHSU health insurance. For the moment this style of benefit design is being maintained and will be maintained for 2019. But its elimination could come up again.

The employee benefits council meets monthly to discuss the pros and cons of these benefit changes and may meet more frequently as we get closer to the fall and a decision needs to be made on next years' plans. Stay tuned for further developments.

Need a union steward or have a contract question?

**Call the ONA Hotline:
503-494-6880**