



## Supporting Employees' Financial Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only challenging the way Americans live on a daily basis, but also posing significant economic threats that could have a lasting effect on their financial wellbeing. For purposes of this article, financial well-being refers to the state in which a person is able to meet their current and ongoing financial obligations, feel secure in their financial future and make choices that allow them to thrive.

### Why It Matters

Finances are a leading cause of stress for employees and can be a major distraction at work. As a result, the workforce could experience reductions in engagement and productivity, increased absences, and poor health and well-being.

### How to Help Employees

Employers can play a key role in supporting the financial well-being of their employees, and should consider the following ways to improve employees' financial literacy:

- Educate employees about financial well-being through workshops and educational content, addressing topics such as student loans, debt, credit, financial goals, emergency funds and retirement.
- Promote financial resources, including employee assistance programs (EAPs).
- Remind employees about all available benefits, and highlight perks that can offer financial relief or savings.

In general, employers should continue their due diligence in reviewing and adjusting benefits offerings so they align with employees' evolving needs.

Financial well-being is a challenging topic that directly impacts the workforce, but employers can offer support and help their employees make educated decisions.

## Workplace Virtual Holiday Parties

At the end of the calendar year, workplace holiday celebrations are experiences that many employees look forward to. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations are evaluating how to engage employees safely this holiday season.

Leaders find themselves tasked with deciding whether they should cancel or postpone celebrations, or offer an amended version that prioritizes safety—with many choosing to offer a virtual holiday party.

## Considerations for Employers

Holiday celebrations can positively impact employee engagement, but benefits should be weighed against other factors such as financial costs and concerns over safety. For employers choosing to offer a celebration, an event can be comprised of a variety of activities—with many options that can take place virtually. These include a:

- Secret Santa gift exchange
- Virtual mixer
- Gingerbread house contest
- Ugly sweater contest
- Holiday karaoke
- Online escape room
- Trivia contest

When hosting a holiday event, employers should make sure to follow best practices, such as:

- Keeping attendance optional
- Keeping events general rather than religious celebrations
- Ensuring employees are aware of policies and expected behaviors

There are a variety of ways that leaders can recognize employees this holiday season, and employers should consider which initiatives are appropriate for their workplace. For additional employee engagement resources, contact Cornerstone Benefit Plans, Inc. today.

## Final Rule on Health Care Transparency Issue

The Departments of Labor (DOL), Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Treasury (Departments) issued a final rule that imposes new transparency requirements on group health plans and health insurers in the individual and group markets. Specifically, the final rule requires plans and issuers to disclose:

- Price and cost-sharing information to participants, beneficiaries and enrollees upon request:
  - A list of 500 shoppable services must be available via the internet for plan years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2023.
  - The remainder of all items and services is required to be available for plan years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2024.

• In-network provider-negotiated rates and historical out-of-network allowed amounts on their website:

- Detailed pricing information must be made public for plan years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2022.

The final rule also allows issuers that share savings with consumers—resulting from consumers shopping for lower-cost, higher-value services—to take credit for those “shared savings” payments in their medical loss ratio calculations. Contact us today to learn more.

## Employee Benefits Plan Limits for 2021

Many employee benefits are subject to annual dollar limits that are periodically updated for inflation by the IRS.

The IRS typically announces the dollar limits that will apply for the next calendar year well in advance of the beginning of that year.

This gives employers time to update their plan designs and make sure their plan administration will be consistent with the new limits. Although some of the limits will increase for 2021, most of the limits remain the same.

### Increased Limits

For plan years beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2021, the following limits have increased:

#### • Health savings account contributions:

- Single coverage—\$3,600 (up \$50)
- Family coverage—\$7,200 (up \$100)

#### • High deductible health plan (HDHP) out-of-pocket maximum limit:

- Single coverage—\$7,000 (up \$100)
- Family coverage—\$14,000 (up \$200)

• Tax exclusion for adoption assistance benefits—\$14,440 (up \$140)

**Unchanged Limits** Certain limits will not change for 2021, including the flexible spending account salary reduction contribution limit, HDHP minimum deductible, 401(k) contribution limit and transportation fringe benefits monthly limits.



Jerry Ciaramitaro  
President, JD, MBA



Jason Ciaramitaro, VP  
Benefit Advisor



Jordan Ciaramitaro, QPFC  
Benefit Advisor

For more information, please contact our office at:

Phone: 248-641-2740

[jc@cornerstonebenefitplans.com](mailto:jc@cornerstonebenefitplans.com)

[www.cornerstonebenefitplans.com](http://www.cornerstonebenefitplans.com)

