

Health Insurance Trends in 2023

Last year's omnibus spending bill included \$14.1 billion for SSA (Social Security Administration) to help solve their customer service crisis. If you have tried to call your social security office, you know what I mean. It is reported that one out of five calls are never answered, and waiting periods have more than doubled.

Staffing shortages are at a 25-year low and this is compounded by the fact that the number of new beneficiaries has increased by 22%, go Boomers! Those making online applications for Medicare Part B have experienced increased delays in getting their applications approved. Processing time has increased from a few weeks to up to 90 days. I can attest that many of my clients have experienced this long delay. A recent client said it took 6 weeks to get his Medicare card. I would recommend that if you are not collecting social security, you apply as early as possible at www.ssa.gov/Medicare. You can do so 4-3 months before your birth month or desired effective date.

Other Medicare news for 2023 includes additional benefits on most Advantage plans. Dental/vision and hearing benefits have increased on most plans. On the negative side, PDP or prescription drug plans have increased in price.

There is also a trend for more folks to sign up for a Medicare Supplement Plan N over a Plan G. The premium for a Plan G is generally \$25-\$40 more per month compared to a Plan N. The biggest difference is that you as pay a \$20 copay for doctor visits and \$50 for an emergency room visit. You are also subject to a 15% excess charge for doctors and hospitals that don't accept the Medicare reimbursement rates. There are other considerations which I would be happy to explain but in general, Plan N rates should be more stable and not increase as much as Plan G rates.

What has happened on the under 65-year-old side regarding individual insurance? Well, those that had a Bright Health Plan have had to switch to another carrier and the feedback I received from many clients is that the benefits on Bright Health were better than those offered by their new carrier, plus the premiums are higher.

In addition, individual deductibles and out of pocket maximums have increased and drug coverage has been reduced. It is fortunate that other pharmacy options are available without using your insurance. I would suggest having a conversation with your pharmacist to see if they can recommend a more affordable way to buy your prescriptions.

Open enrollment is now closed for both Medicare and Individual plans for 2023. There are Special Enrollment Periods such as a major life change or move outside of your service area. But for the most part, what you have now will be in effect until the end of the year.

Should you have any questions, please give us a call. Our services are free and we are happy to answer any question you may have.