



*Representing Ohio's Leading Health Insurance Agents*

## **Public School Employees Health Care Benefits**

In the previous state budget that Ohio operated under until June 30, 2007, the Ohio General Assembly created the School Employees Health Care Board (Board) and the Public Schools Health Care Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to look into the possibility of establishing a statewide health care purchasing pool for public school employees. The Ohio Association of Health Underwriters (OAHU) had three representatives on the Advisory Committee and actively participated in discussing ways to provide quality, affordable health care for public school employees. During the past year both the Board and the Advisory Committee have been meeting regularly. In the current budget that went into effect on July 1, 2007 the General Assembly required the Board to develop "Best Practice Standards" with transparency of outcomes, and support of policies and programs that motivate innovation.

Through the education efforts of OAHU and other stakeholders the General Assembly directed the Board to not require one statewide pool or regional purchasing pools for all health care benefits (it is important to note that a majority of school districts are already participating in various types of consortia or purchasing pools).

### **Best Practices Standards**

The cornerstone of the School Employees Health Care Board recommendations is the establishment of Best Practices Standards. Best Practices identify the minimum standards to be achieved across a broad spectrum of criteria. The Board believes that these standards should improve efficiencies, quality of health benefits management and reduce rate increases in health insurance premiums. Health plans will be required to meet or exceed these standards within a reasonable and a given period of time, to be developed by the Board in collaboration with the Advisory Committee. The first group of Best Practices Standards the Board has drafted for public comment is:

- Employee Wellness Programs
- Disease State Management
- Access to Specialty Networks
- Dependent Eligibility Audits.

### **Board Recommendations Consistent with OAHU Comments**

The Board's current recommendations appear to be consistent with OAHU's comments submitted to the Board recommending the implementation of Best Practices Standards. OAHU strongly believes that whether or not a public school district receives its health care benefits through a consortium or as a stand alone district, it is through the implementation of Best Practices that the goal of quality health care and cost containment can be achieved. These standards will preserve local control and not create the problem of winners and losers that the establishment of a statewide purchasing pool would have created. OAHU will continue to work with the Board and interested parties to support market-driven approaches to meeting the health care benefits needs of public school employees.

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