Retiree Health Coverage Options when Employer Reduces or Terminates Benefits

The Ohio Department of Insurance through its Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program (OSHIIP) is the state's lead educational program to explain health coverage options available to Ohio retirees whose benefits have been reduced or terminated by their former employer.

Companies can decide to reduce or terminate retiree health benefits for different reasons. Some companies may hire insurance agencies to help their retirees shop for other coverage options. However, such agencies may not be able to shop all of the available Medicare products because of sales agreements with the insurance companies they represent. These agencies may offer assistance by sending sales information to retirees via mail and by holding local informational sessions. Remember, you have 63 days from the day coverage ends to make a decision on new coverage options.

The Department's OSHIIP program provides free and unbiased health coverage information through trained representatives, available by calling **1-800-686-1578**. Representatives can help retirees sort coverage options to identify the one that best fits their healthcare needs and financial situation. Information is also available at www.insurance.ohio.gov.

Options for retirees who have lost employer-provided coverage can include:

- Coverage through a working spouse
- Coverage through a professional organization
- Original Medicare only
- Original Medicare plus a Medicare Supplemental plan
- The addition of a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan
- A Medicare Advantage plan (replaces Original Medicare, a Medicare Supplemental plan and may offer prescription drug coverage too)
- Individual private insurance
- Self-insuring by paying all healthcare costs with savings

Consumer tips:

- There is no fee associated with Medicare enrollment. If you are charged an enrollment fee, call OSHIIP to report it: **1-800-686-1578**.
- You can shop all coverage choices and enroll for Medicare coverage by calling **1-800-MEDICARE** or visiting www.medicare.gov. OSHIIP **(1-800-686-1578)** can also be of assistance.
- Retirees should invite a loved one and/or trusted advisor to sit in on any sales appointments.
- Ask the agent for his or her business card at the beginning of the sales appointment.
- Ask the agent to leave printed material explaining costs, benefits and exclusions.
- Ask for a complete list of companies and products represented by the agency or agent and if they receive any product commissions.
- If you feel you are being pressured into selecting a certain type of coverage or plan, report it to the Department's Enforcement Division at **1-800-686-1527**.

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