Support Staff Benefit Program (SSBP)
Seeking Efficiencies in Current Spending

This is the first bulletin for 2015 prepared by the Support Staff Benefits Committee and outlines the current benefit program features.

Since 2002, the University and NASA have been working together through the SSBC to oversee and manage the costs of the Support Staff Benefit Plan (SSBP) as these are a significant item to many employees. The SSBP includes Basic and Optional Life Insurance, Optional Dependent Life, Long Term Disability, Dental Care, Supplemental Health Care (prescription drug coverage, paramedical services, vision care, etc.), Health Spending Account, Personal Spending Account, Employee and Family Assistance, Critical Illness Insurance, Tuition Remission and Occupational Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance.

The Committee has had success in ensuring that the benefit plan meets (as best as it can) the needs of employees within agreed budget targets and that it is managed efficiently and responsibly to support both individual and organizational health. Over the last few years, the Support Staff Benefits Committee (SSBC) was able to improve several areas where our benefits plan was below market – life insurance went from 1 x annual salary to 2 x annual salary in 2010, a Critical Illness benefit was added in 2012, and a Health Spending Account and Personal Spending Account were added in 2013. A responsibility of the SSBC is continual review of the benefit program to monitor expenses and make ‘efficiency in current spend’ recommendations related to the future of the plan. These recommendations come jointly to both the University and NASA during bargaining. To ensure independent informed knowledge and expertise is available, the Committee engages an outside benefits consulting firm, Aon Hewitt, to provide advice and recommendations regarding benefit program management.

Equally important to the SSBC is to ensure the benefits plan is meeting the benefit needs of plan members in a way that is efficient and cost effective, and is able to be sustained into the future. Support staff have made it very clear that their benefits are important to them and have taken every opportunity to confirm the value these benefits bring to their lives, to their family and to their overall compensation.

With a mandate to manage fixed resources for the benefit of all covered members and their dependants, the SSBC is now focusing on evidence-based coverage that can appreciably improve health and quality of life outcomes. The priorities are health initiatives and health products or services which demonstrate a high value for covered members and their dependants at a reasonable plan cost. Our plan attempts to ensure covered members and their dependants have the health resources they need, when they need it, based on the unique health status of each individual, and what is fair and cost-effective for the health of the benefits plan.

In carrying out its work, the SSBC is committed to working with plan members by sharing information, raising awareness and receiving feedback about the plan and various benefit issues which may be raised. Over the coming weeks, you will receive a series of benefit plan communications.
posted in the NASA News, on the NASA and Human Resource Services websites, and sent through direct e-mail. The Committee is open to feedback about your benefit needs and will present its recommendations to the University and NASA for consideration.

We encourage you to go to the Sun Life website at www.mysunlife.ca and review resources available to you as a plan member. These include Sun Life’s drug inquiry tool (which indicates preferred products) and a Dental Fee Guide (so you can see how your dentist compares). There is also a My Sun Life Mobile Application for your mobile device(s).

Additionally, the attached document describes Total Compensation (if you are not already familiar with this concept) and how the cost of the Benefit Program relates to salary and other employment benefits. Also in this guide is some general information on the many benefits available to you and how the various benefits provided as part of your employment are used by support staff as a group.

If you have any questions, please contact any of the members of the Support Staff Benefits Committee listed below.

Support Staff Benefits Committee Members
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