



HUMAN RESOURCES AND LABOR RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

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To: County Staff

From: Andrew S. McKinnon, Director
Human Resources and Labor Relations

Date: January 10, 2021

Re: Benefits Update

As is relatively common this time of year, we have had a few hiccups with our benefit rollover. There are primarily two issues that have yet to be resolved – BCBSM Vision accounts and FSA card activation. We are hoping they will be resolved this week. I am very sorry for these delays and I know that it causes an inconvenience for our staff.

First, this year as many of you remember, we moved away from SVS vision to the Blue Cross Blue Shield product (VSP Network). The provider network for BCBSM is far broader to that of SVS and in fact SVS is covered in BCBSM VSP. In addition, while the coverage is almost identical, it is actually slightly improved with BCBSM VSP. According to Blue Cross they are having some delays in finalizing our transition and they are blaming the pandemic. However, BCBSM seems to always have some processing issues annually, so I think the pandemic is just an excuse. BCBSM is the premier provider of medical and other health benefits in our state. As such, they do get some grace with their processing issues.

Once BCBSM finalizes their issues, they will send new vision cards. If you need to have access before you receive your card, please contact Jennifer Smiley at Jennifer.Smiley@macombgov.org. She and her team will assist you with that.

Our second issue is with our FSA cards. They are currently inactive. BASIC, our FSA provider, will not provide us with a date certain for when this issue will be resolved. BASIC has always been a solid partner of ours; however, they are giving inconsistent answers about their FSA benefit and what the issue is. They have committed to having this fixed by the 21st and I expressed that is far too long to correct the issue. Below is a segment of one of their emails to me:

"If a participant has an out of pocket expenses in the mean time they are able to send in the expense to the following location and it will be paid once everything is wrapped up: [Claim Portal \(basiconline.com\)](https://www.basiconline.com)"

While it's good to know that we can reimburse ourselves for qualifying, out-of-pocket expenses from our own FSA accounts, there are those staff who are struggling to afford medications because they specifically set aside money into their FSA for this purpose. As mentioned, we find BASIC's customer service unacceptable and we will be seeking other partners to provide this service.

I specifically waited to send this memo because we were hoping to have better news for you all. Now that we are 10 days into the year, I didn't think it was appropriate to wait any longer.

We will update you as soon as we have any other news and please let me know if there's anything we can do to assist you all in the meantime.

Take care.