

Benefits Insights

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3 Voluntary Benefits Trends to Watch in 2022

Benefits have always been crucial for attracting and retaining top performers, and voluntary benefits are a great way for employers to round off their offerings. These extra perks allow for more personalization that can help satisfy the unique needs of each worker, especially in today's multigenerational workforce. Although individual needs vary, some common themes—physical, mental and financial wellness—have surfaced, and employers can help address these pressing issues through expanded voluntary benefits offerings.

A rising number of organizations recognize that voluntary benefits are beneficial to employees and their families—and many come at little to no cost for the employer. This article highlights three voluntary benefits trends to monitor in 2022.

1. Emphasis on Holistic Voluntary Benefits Offerings

The voluntary benefits market has been expanding steadily over the years and will continue to grow in 2022. According to a recent Willis Towers Watson survey, nearly all employers (94%) find voluntary benefits important to their talent and total rewards strategies over the next three years. Back in 2018, just 36% of employers felt that way. It's expected that more employers this year will offer a wide range of voluntary benefits options to meet the needs of their current and prospective employees.

Dental and vision care continue to be standard voluntary benefits. However, Americans face a different landscape shaped by nearly two years of the coronavirus pandemic. As the pandemic continues to impact workplaces and personal lives, nontraditional offerings like critical illness, hospital indemnity, pet insurance, identity theft and group legal are becoming popular. More employees are looking to protect their health, safety and finances—but might need some help or guidance to get started on their goals.

One of the best perks of voluntary benefits is that they are, in fact, optional, so employees can opt for the coverage that matters most to them. As a result, more organizations may design benefits packages that provide a range of options. Since employees often face unique stressors or challenges, employers can offer a wide array of benefits or services to support their workforces. Supplemental offerings could be precisely what employees need to fill in coverage gaps as the pandemic continues.

2. Increased Financial Wellness Support

Money is a top stressor for employees, and the pandemic has reinforced that fact. Finance-related voluntary benefits have the potential to support employees with much-desired financial guidance and educational resources. Increasingly popular financial wellness benefits include retirement savings plans, safety net insurance, emergency savings funds, student loan repayment, and financial planning or coaching.

When employees experience lower financial stress, employers may see greater employee productivity and morale and lower absenteeism. Economic recovery from the pandemic will take some time, but voluntary benefits could help decrease employees' financial stress.

3. Expanded Remote Health Services

The pandemic has undoubtedly increased employee stress, depression and anxiety. As a result, many employees need more mental health support than before the pandemic. On the other hand, employees may have put off preventive care or other health care services during the pandemic.

One way to combat those issues is to help make remote health services more accessible and affordable. To ensure employees receive necessary physical and mental health support, telemedicine or remote health services can help increase accessibility to resources and treatment; they have proven to be a valuable and cost-effective way to receive medical care from the comfort of home. As such, telemedicine is quickly proving to be a game-changer, and employers will want to consider adopting or expanding their current offerings to accommodate it.

Summary

Voluntary benefits are helpful add-ons that can round out any benefits package. They help provide value to employees without raising an employer's costs, making them powerful tools. Voluntary benefits have helped organizations around the country with the multitude of issues brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, those issues—including financial insecurity, mental health and health care access—are likely to remain in 2022 and beyond. Therefore, employers should consider exploring voluntary benefits to round off their current offerings.

Reach out to MST Insurance Solutions, Inc. to learn more about the power of voluntary benefits.

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