

Commissioner's Comments

Of the many services provided by Department of Personnel Staff, employee benefits, particularly health care benefits, seem to be attracting the most attention these days. This is due in part to expanded media coverage; the continual debate over Canadian drug reimportation; and the ever escalating costs associated with all related health care services. As you know from previous editions of OUTLOOK, I have established as a service priority for myself and my staff to not only address issues that arise concerning our health care plans in an effective and timely manner, but to keep you well informed of any changes to our benefit plans, and to remind you periodically of benefits available

to you as an employee of the State of Vermont.

Our Customer Service Pledge - to You

That's right—we at the Department of Personnel consider you our customers. And it is our goal to provide you—our valued customers—with the best possible service. That means providing the highest quality benefits at the most competitive cost; dealing with individual problems as soon they arise; and working on your behalf with any of our carriers or providers to resolve ongoing administrative problems as quickly as possible. We can only do this, however, if we know when you, our customers, are experiencing problems and what those problems are. So, to help ensure you receive the highest level of service possible, I strongly encourage you to bring any issues you may have with our health plans to the attention of our Employee Benefits Team as soon as possible.

Many plan members have individual questions answered efficiently by calling Cigna or

Express Scripts customer service groups directly. We believe, however, that if a particular issue is unusually complicated or has been ongoing, the best way to resolve it is with the assistance of our Employee Benefits staff. Jerry Fry and Anne Carver have used their expertise and outstanding customer service skills to help plan members find answers to questions and resolve even the most complicated situations. We are fortunate to have them on our team and I encourage you to take advantage of their talents. Jerry can be reached at jfry@per.state.vt.us or 828-3455. Anne can be reached at acarver@per.state.vt.us or 828-0648.

Thanks for keeping us informed and, remember, our benefits staff is available and committed to providing you with exceptional customer service should you require assistance for any reason.



Cindy LaWare

Express Scripts What's New?

We have some news concerning our prescription drug contract with Express Scripts. You may recall that in the January 2004 OUTLOOK, I discussed the advan-

The fastest way to get a benefits issue resolved is to call Employee Benefits

Our Benefits Team makes the following Customer Service Pledge to you:

- Voice/Email messages returned the same day.
- Messages received late in the day returned as soon as possible the next business day.
- Claims issues resolved within 24 hours, whenever possible. For more complicated issues, we will notify you within 24 hours as to when you can expect a resolution.
- Customers requiring immediate assistance have an "opt out" option that will connect them immediately with a Benefits Specialist.

Current data shows that between September 2002 and August 2003, Cigna processed over 220,000 claims for our plan members. The vast majority of these claims were processed without incident. Unfortunately, few things in life are "glitch" free. If we work together, however, we can minimize the issues that arise, timely resolve the ones that do, and effectively address any systematic problems.

tages of ordering long-term maintenance medications through the Express Scripts Mail Service Pharmacy. Although this is still the most convenient and cost effective way to obtain 90-day refills of long-term medications, we now have another option.

Effective April 1, 2004, the State and VSEA have agreed to amend the prescription drug plan to allow members to obtain 90-day prescriptions of long-term medications through retail pharmacies as well as mail order.

- You will be required to provide the retail pharmacy with a 90-day prescription from your physician to make this change.
- Any prescriptions for new medications must be filled at retail for the first 30-day supply. Then, if your physician determines it is appropriate for you to continue the medication for 90 days or more, you have the option of using Express Script's Mail Order Service or going to a retail pharmacy. In either case, you must present a 90 day prescription from your doctor.

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Employee Life Insurance Are you enrolled?

The State of Vermont offers employees an excellent benefit of life insurance equal to, approximately, two times your annual salary. The monthly cost for this benefit is minimal. Although, the initial enrollment period is within 60 days of employment, it is possible to enroll even if you have missed the deadline.

You can obtain more information and an enrollment form from your Personnel Officer; by visiting the Department of Personnel's website at http://vermontpersonnel.org/employee/benefits_life.cfm; or by contacting our Employee Benefits staff.

I encourage you to take time to check your pay statement right now. If there is no deduction being taken for life insurance, then you are not enrolled. If you are not enrolled, please consider enrolling. This is a great, low cost benefit, that could be invaluable for your family.

Declaration of Vermont Homestead

OWN A HOME?

If you own a house and it is your home on April 1, 2004, you must file a Declaration of Vermont Homestead with the Vermont Department of Taxes.



You need to file the declaration even if you are not required to file an income tax return or have never participated in the property tax programs. Declaring a homestead depends on the use of your property not your income.

Why do I need to file a declaration?

- Properties fall into two categories - homestead or non-homestead categories.
- The school property tax rate is different for each category.
- Filing the declaration is the only way to identify your property as a homestead to receive the correct school property tax rate.

DO THE FORM

The declaration is easy to do. You already have most of the information.

- Look for the Declaration of Vermont Homestead, Form HS-131, in your income tax booklet, at your town clerk's office, at post offices, or you can go to www.vt.gov/DoTheForm to file the form on line.
- Read the instructions.
- Use your 2003 property tax bill to get your School Property Account Number (SPAN).
- File the form by APRIL 15, 2004.

If you need help, contact the Vermont Department of Taxes:

- Email: schooltax@tax.state.vt.us.
- Call 1-866-828-2865 (toll-free in VT) or 802-828-2865 (local or out-of-state calls) to speak with taxpayer assistance staff.
- Or visit the Tax Department's website at: <http://www.state.vt.us/tax>.

Ever notice the reserved parking spaces around the state offices? Want to take advantage of premium parking?

Register your carpool or vanpool with Vermont Rideshare and ensure you have access to the designated parking!
Not in a pool? Sign up today and we'll send you a free matchlist of commuters in your area interested in sharing a ride!

YES! I participate in (check one)

- Carpool Vanpool

No, my carpool/vanpool is no longer operating, but I am am not interested in participating in a new carpool/vanpool.

Name _____ Daytime Phone _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City, State _____ Zip _____

At which state facility do you work? (Check one)

- Montpelier Barre Middlesex

Which days do you rideshare?

- Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

What are your work hours? _____ How many people are in your pool? _____

Would you like information on vanpools that match your commute? Yes No

Signed _____ Date _____

All information is used for rideshare purposes only.

Please return your completed form no later than March 30, 2004 to ensure your parking space at State Facilities!

Vermont Rideshare is currently working with the Buildings and General Services to ensure all carpools are registered, have the appropriate parking tags, adequate parking is available and parking regulations are enforced. Don't be left out! Simply complete the form below and fax or mail it to Vermont Rideshare today. Mail: CCTA/Vermont Rideshare, PO Box 609, Burlington, VT 05402. Fax: 802-864-5564.

