

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **MILITARY FAMILY LEAVE POSTER AVAILABLE**
- **GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE PRICES STABILIZE**

Monthly Newsletter

Military Family Leave Poster Available

Source: CCH Spencer's Benefits Reports Net-News June 6, 2008 <http://hr.cch.com>

The Department of Labor has issued a general notice that employers must post prominently to inform employees of the expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to working family members of active-duty military personnel. The poster, at <http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/NDAAAmndmnts.pdf>, is available in English and in Spanish.

With its enactment on January 28, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (P.L. 110.-181), expanded FMLA rights to family members of active-duty military personnel. Sec. 585 of the law allows employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave when a spouse, son, daughter, or parent is on active duty in the military or is called up for active duty, including National Guard and Reserve members.

The law also allows an employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a service member injured or ill in the line of military duty to take a total of 26 work-weeks of leave during a 12-month period to care for the service member. "Next of kin" is specific to the extension of FMLA to up to 26 weeks (not the usual 12-weeks of FMLA) for military injured or ill while on active duty. This is to make allowance for military members who have no first line relatives available.

Group Health Insurance Prices Stabilize

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According to the *Employee Benefits Market Survey* conducted by The Council of Insurance Agents & Brokers, the cost of group medical care is increasing at almost the same rate as was reported in November 2007 for renewals, regardless of the size of the account.

In the 2008 survey, benefits consultants said that 85% of renewals for small accounts, those with 50 or fewer employees, experienced cost increases, with the bulk of the hikes (46%) falling in the 11% to 15% range. For medium-sized accounts --those with 51 to 500 employees --90% of accounts experienced increases, with 36% experiencing increases of 6% to 10%, and 39% experiencing increases in the 11% to 15% range.

Three-fourths of the large accounts, those with 501 or more employees, also experienced premium hikes for their group health policies, with most increases (46%) falling in the 6% to 10% range.

Among the changes frequently adopted by employers to keep their medical expenses in check were higher deductibles and copayments, increased employee share of premium costs and assessing prescription drug copayments. Eliminating group medical coverage was the least popular cost-control option, with most brokers reporting that their clients seek other ways to address the expense issue.

Although still not a universally popular option, the brokers said that more clients were expressing interest in moving all or part of their health care benefits programs to high-deductible health plans (HDHPs) coupled with

a health reimbursement arrangement or a health savings account (HSA) to help control costs.

Of the clients who were selecting HDHPs coupled with HSAs, most were using it as a plan option rather than a replacement for an existing plan, the brokers said, and the most common employer contribution toward the cost was \$500 to \$749 per employee.

For the complete survey, visit <http://www.ciab.com>.