

The Connection

April 2009

Mission: To provide a high quality plan of health and other benefits that are affordable to the employee and the employer

Tips to Reduce Stress

Fear, uncertainty and change cause stress. A little stress can motivate; a lot of stress can hurt.

Take a deep breath

Taking a few deep breaths can be a powerful way to lower your blood pressure and slow your pulse. You feel calmer.

Reflect on the stressor

Focus on the cause of your stress, and think of steps to take control, if you can, or let it go, if you can't.

Take care of yourself

Exercise and eat a healthy diet. To keep it interesting, try something different.

"I started going to yoga in September. It has really helped all those aches and pains I was so used to having. I also take my grandchildren to yoga, and it is a special time for them to be with me. I have been trying to do more types of activities instead of just sitting all day and evening."

—PEBB member

More Help

Your employee assistance program through Cascade Centers can help with stress. Browse the Personal Advantage Web site for more tips.

From the [PEBB portal page](#), click on "[Launch CPA](#)" (upper right of the screen). After you log in, search "stress." Pick from more than 100 helpful articles.

Help with premiums if you lose your job

A new program in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), passed Feb. 17, 2009, offers help with COBRA insurance premiums if you lose your job.

Under the current federal COBRA law, if you or your dependents lose eligibility for healthcare coverage, you can enroll within 60 days of that loss to continue in PEBB plans for a limited time – usually 18 months. You pay the premium (plus administration fee).

Under ARRA, your former employer will subsidize 65 percent of the premium cost for nine months.

Who is eligible? State employees in PEBB who involuntarily lose their jobs Sept. 1, 2008 – Dec. 31, 2009, are eligible for the subsidy, as are their qualified family members.

When does it apply? If you lose your job Sept. 1, 2008 – Dec. 31, 2009, the subsidy is available for nine months as long as you continue to be eligible. March 2009 was the first "premium month" when the subsidy could apply. It is not retroactive on COBRA premiums paid before March. You lose eligibility when you become eligible for other group-plan coverage.

How do I access it? If you lose your job, you will receive a notice and enrollment information in the mail from PEBB's third-party administrator. After you enroll, you must pay 35 percent of the cost of the coverage you choose. Your employer, through PEBB, will pay the 65-percent subsidy.

Can I enroll now if I didn't before? Yes. This program gives you a second chance to enroll for COBRA. If you lost your job from Sept. 1, 2008 on, but did not enroll during your 60-day enrollment window, you may enroll now. You will receive a notice in the mail.

This summary information is an overview, only. Here are additional resources.

[BenefitHelp Solutions](#): PEBB's third-party administrator

[Department of Labor](#): How the COBRA subsidy operates

[Internal Revenue Service](#): Income limits and taxes

oregon.gov/das/pebb

Upcoming Board Meetings

Schedules and agendas subject to change.

April 21

May 19

June 16

View meetings [live](#) or [recorded](#).

[View agendas](#) when published.

Public Comment

Public meetings include a time slot for public comment. Sign up to [comment](#).

Connect with your Benefit Board

pebb.connect@state.or.us

Voting members

Sue Nelson, *Chair*

Rich Peppers, *Vice Chair*

Peter Callero

Rocky King

Paul McKenna

Jeanene Smith

Diane Lovell

Bret West

Advisory Members

Rep. Tina Kotek

Sen. William Morrisette

Resources

oregon.gov/das/pebb

inquiries.pebb@state.or.us

(503) 373-1102

Medical Plans

[Kaiser Permanente](#)

[Providence Choice](#)

[Regence BCBSO](#)

[VSP](#) (Vision Service Plan)

Mail-order Prescriptions

[PPS](#)

[Walgreens](#)

Dental Plans

[Kaiser Permanente](#)

[ODS](#)

[Willamette Dental](#)

Optional Plans

[The Standard](#)

[UnumProvident](#)

Other Benefits

[FSA: ASIFlex](#)

[EAP: Cascade Centers](#)

Board Moves to Self-insure

During its March meeting, your Benefit Board moved by unanimous vote to self-insure the statewide medical plan beginning 2010. The Board chose this option to control costs while maintaining statewide access. [Read the Q&A here.](#)

Minutes become Money for Food Bank

Hundreds of state employees turned a few minutes of time on their health into food for the hungry during February.

By completing their online health risk assessment (HRA), employees met the Providence and Regence challenge, and the plans donated \$2,500 each to the annual food drive.

Employees who did their HRA learned about their health risks and how to reduce them. At the same time, they generated \$5,000 for Oregonians in need of nutritional support.

See Resources below to connect with your plan's online HRA.

Weight Watcher Success

I have lost 10 pounds in three weeks. My blood sugar has improved to the point that I have stopped taking one medication and am looking forward to where I can drop all of them. And without going hungry!

—PEBB member

I just came from my Dr. who said I look like I took 10 years off my age. I've lost 16 pounds on my way to a 30 pound loss goal. I signed up for the online version right after it was announced and I've been losing about 1-2 lbs per week. I've been forcing myself to take a lunch break where I walk, and I walk when I get home in the evening. This program has provided the much needed inspiration to accomplish this, and my health is improving dramatically.

—PEBB member

Enroll or re-enroll for Weight Watchers at no cost

www.mypowwr.com/downloads/PEBB.pdf

Happy Birthday Time for your screening

Why the link between birthdays and cancer screenings? Because your age often determines your screening schedule.

Your Benefit Board designed your medical plan to fully cover the cost of cancer screenings based on schedules recommended by the [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#).

Check recommendations from the Task Force, and check with your provider to schedule your screenings.

