



**Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. Phone: (905)886-9203**

## In order to serve you better

To assist you with your employee benefit plan, we are continually updating our website. Located at:

[www.mainstayinsurance.ca](http://www.mainstayinsurance.ca)

The site provides easy access to many insurance company's websites and to the health and dental claim forms you utilize on a regular basis. We have also added links to the log on pages for members (employees) to provide quick access to other websites.

## Did you know that...

... According to recent StatsCan data, nearly 72% of permanent employees in Canada now have access to workplace medical and dental benefits, up from 68.3% just three years ago. This indicates that employers are providing coverage to more employees each year, with a significant overall increase since the pandemic. Employers are also covering the vast majority of benefit costs for their employees.

There are still gaps however with only 9.7% of temporary part-time employees having access to benefits, although the demand from this group is decreasing.

Coverage rates vary sharply by age: only 27.6% of employees aged 15 to 24 report having workplace benefits (entry level positions), compared to 75.1% of core-aged workers (aged 25-54) and 67.4% of those 55 and older.

Need help finding a form, phone number, or just help in general, please do not hesitate to call us at: 905-886-9203 or send us an e-mail at:

[Dave@mainstayinsurance.ca](mailto:Dave@mainstayinsurance.ca)

## Students Back to School? Time to update coverage!

If you have a child who has just started post secondary education or has just returned, it is your responsibility to ensure that their information is kept up to date with your insurer to maintain their benefit coverage.

Most group benefit plans define a dependant child as "an employee's natural or adopted child, or stepchild" who is

- Unmarried;
- Not employed on a full-time basis;
- Not eligible for insurance under another group policy; AND
- Either under 21 years of age or, if a full-time student at an accredited school, college or university, under 25 years of age.

Depending on the insurer, you may be asked to complete a form providing details such as the name of the school, the length of the program etc. Some may also ask for proof of full-time enrolment and others may simply ask for confirmation via a phone call to verify that your child is enrolled full time, with that call being recorded.

In most cases you will be required to update information with the insurer each year that your child is returning to school and remains eligible for coverage. Most carriers require their information by the end of August.

Keeping this information up to date is EXTREMELY important. By ensuring coverage is current it ensures quick and easy claims payment should your child need prescription drugs or a dental visit while at school. It also ensures that the appropriate out of country coverage is in force. This is very important if your child were to leave the country and require emergency medical treatment. School or spring break trips are good examples of when emergency services might be needed. An emergency is NOT the time to find out that your child has been removed from the benefit plan because you forgot to update their information.

If your child is enrolled in a post secondary school that is outside of Canada, there are a number of other issues that also need to be considered when it comes to benefits.

The student will require an extension from OHIP (or your provincial health insurance plan). This extension does two things: it ensures your child's ongoing OHIP coverage upon their return from school and MAY allow group benefit plans to be extended to maintain coverage. This coverage is NOT automatic. In most cases

the insurer will need to be notified that your child will be attending school out of the country, that the OHIP coverage extension has been approved, and that they are enrolled in school full-time (the same requirement for an in-province student). Due to changes in US legislation (Affordable Care Act), US schools will no longer accept extensions of group coverage for students studying there. This is due to the fact that it is emergency only coverage and below their minimum requirements. Coverage made specifically for US students may provide the best option in these cases.

If your child is no longer a full-time post secondary student, is married or is working full-time, they are no longer eligible to be on your benefit plan. They must enroll in the plan provided by their own employer or obtain personal individual coverage of their own.

Speak to your plan administrator or call the insurer directly if you have any questions or concerns, or to verify your child's coverage.

Insurer contact information can be obtained from your employee booklet or through our website at: [www.mainstayinsurance.ca](http://www.mainstayinsurance.ca)



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This information is provided as a reference to clients of Mainstay Insurance Brokerage Inc. It is not intended as advice. Your situation and the contract provided by your insurer plus any relevant legislation shall always take precedence. Always obtain appropriate legal, human resource or accounting advice.

Note: This side of the newsletter is intended for you the plan administrator. The information on the 'front' is targeted more to your staff and can be copied and distributed for their reference.

### Just in case you were wondering...

...more than 6 million Canadians currently have no access to a regular primary care physician and emergency room closures due to staffing shortages are impacting care in many communities across Canada. This is all happening while Canadians still spent \$372 billion on health care in 2024: a blend of about 71% public and 29% private funding.

If you need physician support one option is to reach out to telemedicine models such as [www.tiahealth.com](http://www.tiahealth.com)

## Salary updates need to be reported, and the proper coverage applied for to ensure employees are protected

With Canadian employees receiving average salary increases of 3-4% this year, many employers are increasing salaries in an effort to retain staff.

As always, any changes in your employee's earnings must be reported to the insurer promptly if you have either life insurance or disability coverage that is based on employee earnings. This is to ensure that the employee has the proper coverage level in place in the event a claim is submitted.

In some cases salary adjustments may be higher than the insurer is willing to cover without obtaining additional information. This request for more information could be triggered by an increase in earnings of 10%-15% or more. It could also arise from a promotion to a

bigger role (with a corresponding higher salary), or even an increase in hours (from p/t to f/t).

It is also important that employees who have had additional medical information requested from an insurer, complete and submit that information in a timely manner to obtain their proper new level of coverage. Failing to do so can create a liability to your firm in the event of a claim that may result in the employee being underinsured.

Often employees pay the LTD premium to obtain a tax-free benefit if a disability benefit is required to be paid. Some employees who receive a high salary increase may

say "I'm okay with the level of LTD coverage I had and don't want to pay a higher premium so leave it as it is."

### **This is NOT okay.**

Issues can arise if an employee is disabled for a significant time period and the shortfall in LTD benefits that they are actually paid results in them receiving thousands of dollars less over the duration of the disability. This liability is often passed to the employer for failing to ensure the employee received the level of coverage that they were eligible for. We have many ways of reducing this liability (removing the benefit or capping it at a lower level are common solutions), but this means that employees get a reduced benefit, which is not ideal.

## The Gambia Health Centre Update

We've been working diligently to get the health centre built in Jammeh Kebbeh, The Gambia (Western Africa).

Thanks to the the team on the ground in The Gambia (made up of local contractors and village volunteers), to the volunteers here helping to raise the funds, to many of you who made donations during our fund-raising event, we are making great progress.



The buildings and fence are constructed, the roofs are on, and the windows and doors have been ordered and are ready to install.

A team of 12 volunteers (Joanne and I included) will be heading back to The Gambia in the fall to to paint, tile, and do any plumbing and wiring required. We cover our own travel and living costs, and our free labour helps to keep costs down.

After that we'll be running another fundraiser to purchase equipment including items such as beds, cabinets, ultrasounds and more.

Hands Across the Nations is the charity ([www.HATN.org](http://www.HATN.org)). They are a very lean organization with minimal expenses so that over 96% of donations received goes straight to the projects and people who need it.



If you're interested in attending a fundraiser, being added to the HATN newsletter list, making a donation or learning more, drop me a note.