

Employer Health Insurance Discussion Outline: JUNE 12-15, 2001

I. INTRODUCTION (10 Mins.)

- A. Thanks for coming - focus group on health insurance issues.
- B. What you have in common:
 - 1. Health insurance decision-makers or benefits administrators.
 - 2. Many do not offer health insurance to all employees.
- C. Purpose of Participation:
 - 1. Find out about factors employers consider when they make health insurance decisions;
 - 2. Information will be used to explore ways to make health insurance more affordable.
- D. Explain role as independent moderator hired to conduct groups. Introduce IHLE representative (David or Natalie) who will be preparing the report, and tape recorder operator (Lee).
- E. Sessions will be audio-taped, but confidentiality will be maintained. Use first names only.
- F. 1-Page Questionnaire & Name Card (for first names):
Distribute as necessary and give them 3-5 minutes to fill it out and return it. Point out refreshments, facilities. Focus group will end in about 2 hours.
- G. Do First Name Introductions. If you want to, say something about your business.

II. EMPLOYER DECISIONMAKING ON HEALTH INSURANCE (40 Mins.)

- A. Do any of you offer health insurance to all of your employees, including part-time, seasonal, temporary? If not, who is eligible?
- B. *For those that offer:* Do all eligible employees sign up? Describe employees who don't sign up.
Probes: Do you know if they have health insurance from another source? Are they: transient employees, younger employees, employees without dependents, married with spouse who carries insurance, less likely to have health problems that you know about?

- C.** What are the most important factors that have influenced your decision to offer health insurance, or not to offer it?
Probes: cost, attracting/retaining workers, employee/owner interest/need, financial health of business, workforce characteristics, concerns about offering then taking away benefit, paperwork/lack of information.
- D.** Do your competitors offer health insurance?
- E.** Are there benefits to not offering coverage at all? What are they?
Probes: cost savings, fewer administrative hassles
- F.** Are there reasons for not offering health insurance to certain classes of employees, like seasonal, part-time, or temporary employees? What are the reasons?
Probes: administrative hassle, cost, incentive for making employees go full-time, competitors don't offer it, no employee demand
- G.** Type of Coverage:
- For those that offer:* What type of plans do you offer?
Probes: HMO, catastrophic, PPO, traditional/indemnity, choice of plans?
 - For those that offer:* Have you changed plans recently? Are the benefits the same? Describe what has changed.
Probes: Premium increases; reduced benefits; more co-pays; higher deductibles; switched to HMO; switched to catastrophic; employee pays more of the premium.
- H.** Cost & Willingness to Pay
- Does it cost anything to the company not to offer health insurance? What are those costs?
Probes: Absenteeism; Inability to attract/retain employees; new employee training costs
 - For those that don't offer:* What would get you to start offering coverage?
Probes: lower premiums; growth in company; economy; financial assistance; employee demand; owner's need; better information about how to get insurance
 - For those that don't offer:* What monthly premium rate would you be willing to pay? ←

4. What is the minimal type of coverage you would want to be able to offer for the amount of money you could afford to pay?

Probes: HMO, catastrophic, hospital coverage, preventive care coverage with a low co-pay or low deductible

5. *For those that offer:* How much is the monthly premium that the insurer charges you: ←

- a. For employee only coverage _____?
b. For family coverage _____?

6. *For those that offer:* How much of the premium do you pick up, and how much do you ask the employee pay: ←

- a. For employee only coverage _____?
b. For family coverage _____?

7. How do you decide how much the employee should pay?

Probes: Employee input? Advice from health insurer or broker?

8. Have you recently asked employees to pick up more of the cost? Why?

9. *For those offering insurance:* If premiums continue to go up, at what point would you ask employees to pick up more of the cost? ←

10. *For those that offer:* Is there a situation where your company might decide to drop coverage altogether?

- a. What level of premium would you consider too expensive? ←
b. What else might happen that would cause you to discontinue coverage?

III. Information Requirements (10 Mins.)

- A. If you had to find a new health insurance plan for your employees, where would you turn for information?

- B. What information have you relied on in the past in making decisions about health insurance?

Probes: Broker recommendations, insurance company marketing materials, colleague recommendations

C. Do you think you have adequate information about the regulations that affect the type of insurance that is available in NH, or would you like to know more?

D. What kind of information would you find useful in making decisions about health insurance?

Probes: List of insurers; list of products offered and base rates; list of provider networks and specialty providers; small group regulations; instructions on setting up health insurance plans for your employees

IV. INITIATIVES TO EXPAND COVERAGE

A. Employer Ideas (10 Mins.)

1. What, if anything, should be done to make it easier and more affordable for employers to offer health insurance coverage in NH? ←
2. What, if anything, should be done to reduce the number of uninsured in the state?

B. Subsidy (1/3 Model) (10 Mins.)

1. One way of making health insurance more affordable for employers is known as the "1/3 model": Employers that choose to participate pay 1/3 of the monthly premium, their employees pay 1/3, and some other source pays the remaining 1/3. ←

a. What are your ideas regarding who should pay the remaining 1/3?

Probe: State government, federal government, health insurers, another source

b. How do you feel about government involvement in employer-based health insurance? Do you have any concerns about the state government being involved?

Probes: quality of available coverage, paperwork, concern for privacy, higher taxes

c. How do you feel about having health insurers or some other private entity involved in making employer-based health insurance more affordable? Do you have any specific concerns?

Probes: quality of care, privacy, administrative complications, convenience of provider network

d. Would you participate in a program offering financial support for health insurance premiums if your company were eligible? Why/Why not?

- e. Would your employees be willing to pay their 1/3 share, or would they decline coverage? Why/Why not?
- f. Should all employers be eligible for financial support for their health insurance premiums, or should only some employers be eligible? Why?
Probes: Limit based on size of company, current health insurance status, industry (e.g., health care providers, childcare providers)

C. Access Alternatives (20 Mins.)

- 1. If a community health clinic were set up in your community (*Berlin, Conway, etc.*) to provide low cost or free charity care to the uninsured who can't afford to pay for full-cost care, would your company be willing to make financial contributions to help it stay in business?
- 2. Would your answer be any different if the charity care or low cost care were provided outside of a clinic setting, through a network of individual providers?
- 3. Have you ever looked into the idea of making Medical Savings Accounts available to your employees? (*Tax-advantaged savings accounts for employee medical expenses, including health insurance costs.*)
 - a. Would your company be willing to set up and make monthly contributions to employee Medical Savings Accounts?
 - b. How much would your company be willing to contribute to an MSA on a monthly basis per employee, assuming that the administrative costs of managing the account were affordable?
- 4. Should employers play a role in making health education/wellness programs available to their employees (e.g., *smoking cessation, stress reduction, asthma awareness, heart attack/stroke information*)? What kind of a role is appropriate for employers to play?
- 5. Should employers play a role in making annual physicals or screenings (cholesterol, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure) available to their employees?

6. *For those who don't offer:* Would you consider contracting with a health care provider to offer these types of limited check-ups or screenings to your employees or their dependents? Under what circumstances?

D. Refundable Tax Credit (5 Mins.)

1. Are you familiar with the idea of a refundable tax credit for individuals to buy health insurance? (*Federal income tax credit for individuals in the amount of \$1,000 to \$2,000 for the purchase of health insurance. If employer offer health insurance, employer would be required to keep records and administer the credit, similar to the way that they maintain records for withholding or the earned income tax credit.*)
2. Do you think that a refundable tax credit of \$1,000 to \$2,000 for the purchase of health insurance would make a difference in NH in the number of people who are uninsured?

E. Rankings: (10 Mins.)

Prepare list of proposals with bullets on a flip-chart or board:

- i. *Refundable Federal Income Tax Credit*
 - ii. *Subsidized, employer-based health insurance (1/3 Model)*
 - iii. *Employer-funded Medical Savings Accounts*
 - iv. *Employer-provider contracts for physicals or screenings*
 - v. *Community Health Clinics, funded in part by local businesses*
 - vi. *Other Employer/Focus Group-generated ideas?*
1. Based on what you know about the situation in NH, which of the proposals that we have discussed do you prefer, and why?
 - a. Which of the proposals is most likely to reduce the number of uninsured in the state?
 - b. Which is likely to make health care more affordable or accessible for those who don't currently have insurance?

V. CONCLUSION (5 Mins.)

- A. Additional comments? Things you expected to cover that weren't addressed?
- B. Thanks for coming.