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On March 6, 2014, the Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) changed cost-sharing limits and released standards for health insurers and the Exchange (a.k.a., the Health Insurance Marketplace). This article identifies a few items of note for employers.

2015 Cost-Sharing Limits

The 2015 maximum annual out-of-pocket limits for all non-grandfathered plans will increase by 4.2%, lower than originally proposed. The confirmed 2015 amounts are \$6,600 for individual coverage and \$13,200 for family coverage. The maximum 2015 deductibles for insured non-grandfathered small group plans are also slightly lower than proposed at \$2,050 for individual coverage and \$4,100 for family coverage.

Open Enrollment Period For The Exchange

The annual enrollment period for the Exchange for 2015 and subsequent years was again changed. It now begins November 15 and extends through February 15, 2015.

For the benefit year beginning on January 1, 2015, the Exchange must ensure coverage is effective:

- January 1, 2015 for plan selections received by the Exchange on or before December 15, 2014;
- February 1, 2015 for plan selections received by the Exchange from December 16, 2014 through January 15, 2015; and
- March 1, 2015 for plan selections received by the Exchange from January 16, 2015 through February 15, 2015.

Small Business Health Options Program (Shop) Plans

Several standards have been finalized for the federally-facilitated SHOP, including allowing certain flexibilities with employee selection of dental-plans and employer contribution options after 2015 for full-time and non-full-time employees. The rule also confirms that a small employer participating in the SHOP that becomes a large employer would continue to be rated as a small employer.

The final rule permits states to allow SHOP enrollment through an agent or broker website as long as state law coincides. Modifications are being considered that would allow states flexibility in offering employees to choose any plan within a coverage level.

For the regulations, visit:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-03-11/pdf/2014-05052.pdf>

For the fact sheet, visit:

<http://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Fact-sheets/2014-Fact-sheets-items/2014-03-05-2.html>

