ACA Reporting Requirements This Tax Season

This year, Americans will be asked for the first time to indicate on their personal tax returns whether they had medical coverage in 2014. Employees will have to report this on their 1040 forms.

Benefits-eligible employees who were covered by MSU health plans for all of 2014 must check the box stating they had coverage for the full year; they will not be required to submit any further documentation this year.

Some tax preparers and DIY tax programs may ask for a new 1095 Form to confirm 2014 coverage, despite the one-year employer reporting delay. If employees are asked to substantiate coverage, they may use the following:

1. The year-end earnings statement documenting payroll deductions for coverage for the pay period and total for the year.
2. A photo copy of a medical ID card.
3. The form W-2 showing the value of coverage.
4. The employer’s Exchange Notice (if an employer completed Part B: Information About Health Coverage Offered by Your Employer).
5. Copy of the summary plan description (SPD).

If you have any questions, please contact SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu or 517-353-4434.

FMLA Continuous Leave Process Changes

HR’s FMLA/Leaves team will be implementing changes to the FMLA continuous leave process effective March 1, 2015. These changes include:

• The FMLA/Leaves team will run the leave action in the HR/Payroll system based on the information provided on the FMLA form
• The FMLA/Leaves team will process the return-to-work action at the point of release from the treating physician

If you have any questions about these changes, please contact Beth Tominski (for employees whose last names begin with A-L) at 517-884-0188, or Sheila Chorey (for employees whose last names begin with M-Z) at 517-884-3652.
MSU to Rollout Two-Factor Authentication in March

Cyber attacks on computer systems and networks to obtain personal information and other confidential data take place on a daily basis.

To maintain the integrity and security of our institution’s data, Michigan State University is taking steps to increase the level of protection in systems amassing sensitive and personal information by implementing two-factor authentication in March and April 2015. Two-factor authentication will be implemented for a majority of the systems containing sensitive or restricted information.

“Two-factor authentication solutions improve security and reduce the risk of compromise inherent in single-factor authentication solutions such as static passwords,” says MSU Chief Information Security Officer Rob McCurdy. MSU’s Enterprise Business Systems (EBS) will be the first system for which two-factor authentication will be applied March through April 2015. Visit https://secureit.msu.edu/two-factor and learn:

• How to register and manage credentials
• How to use two-factor authentication
• When this will affect you

The decision to start with EBS was made due to the amount of sensitive information they hold and to help protect MSU employees in light of recent theft attempts against the payroll of several individuals.

Once two-factor authentication is implemented for EBS, it will be expanded to additional MSU applications.

Types of Authentication

Passwords alone no longer provide a sufficient degree of safety. While easy to use, passwords are vulnerable to a variety of assaults including guessing, impersonation, observing, borrowing, snooping and phishing.

Stronger authentication methods are needed to reduce the risk of a compromise, especially with high value systems such as those that process or store sensitive and restricted information.

When using two-factor authentication, an individual pairs something they have (e.g., a token) with something they know (e.g., a password).

It’s similar to how an ATM card works. Individuals are able to withdraw money from an account because of something the person has (e.g., a bank card) and something they know (e.g., a PIN).

If one of these two items is lost, stolen, or otherwise compromised, a wrongdoer is unable to withdraw money since they are unlikely to possess both factors.

Two-factor authentication is a much stronger method over a username and password alone. It also provides added protection for both individuals and the MSU community.

“As the world is increasingly interconnected, everyone shares the responsibility of securing that space,” says Joanna Young, MSU vice president of information technology and chief information officer. “We are implementing two-factor authentication to do our part to help protect MSU employees.”

IPF Telecom Offers Emergency Resources Toolkit

IPF Telecommunication Systems has resources to assist campus customers with preparing to support their operational services remotely in the event of weather situations when MSU implements its emergency operations plan. This is also in support of the Guidelines for Maintaining Critical Functions and Services at MSU.

Campus departments and their critical employees are often expected to cover their main telephone numbers remotely when MSU operations are modified due to inclement weather events. IPF has a central page, the emergency resources toolkit, to review the telecommunication resources that will assist with both planning and implementing a departmental plan.

The most effective approach for covering telephones remotely is for departments to consult with the Telecommunication Systems team at IPF in advance of any potential event. This can be accomplished by submitting a service request. An analyst will review department-specific technical configurations, telephone equipment and system needs to recommend the appropriate solution. There is no cost associated with this consultation service.

You can find out more about the service on the IPF website at: http://ipf.msu.edu/services/emergency-resources-toolkit.html or call IPF Telecommunication Systems at 517-353-5515.
Completing an I-9 for a Remote Hire

While HR would prefer an electronic I-9 be completed to minimize errors, we do understand the need of completing a paper Form I-9 for employees who are unable to come to campus within the required time frames. Employees must complete Section 1 of the I-9 form on or before their date of hire and Section 2 within three business days of their date of hire.

The following options are available for completing a Form I-9 for a remote hire:

- College and University Professional Association (CUPA) for Human Resources I-9 Reciprocal Processing Consortium
- Notary or other authorized agent

The new option of utilizing a CUPA I-9 Reciprocal Processing institution allows a Form I-9 to be completed at one of 272 listed institutions at: [http://www.cupahr.org/i9/](http://www.cupahr.org/i9/). Note that if a notary is used to complete the I-9, a notary seal should not be provided on the Form I-9.

Whether utilizing a notary or a CUPA institution, the hiring department must provide the employee with the date of their first day of employment and the Remote Hire Process Instructions: [http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/RemoteHireProcessInstructions.pdf](http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/RemoteHireProcessInstructions.pdf). Additional information can be found at: [http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/RemoteHireProcessPresentation.pdf](http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/RemoteHireProcessPresentation.pdf).

Once the Form I-9 is completed remotely and mailed to the hiring department, the hiring department should then review the paper Form I-9 for common errors, such as the employee's name at the top of page 2 and the date of hire in Section 2. These are commonly missed fields. Upon correction of any errors, the department can then upload the document into the electronic I-9 system. Please see this guide for more information: [http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/Uploading_paper_I-9.pdf](http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/Uploading_paper_I-9.pdf).

Thank You!

Thank you to the many departments turning in their Form I-9s by the required deadlines! We appreciate your hard work and dedication in using the electronic I-9 process and keeping MSU in compliance. See our top-performing departments here: [http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/I9_Top_Performers.pdf](http://www.hr.msu.edu/i9/i9_docs/I9_Top_Performers.pdf).

Telecommuting Policy for Staff Members

Telecommuting is a flexible work arrangement that can help staff balance work responsibilities and personal circumstances. All telecommuting arrangements require both the supervisor and employee to sign a Telecommuting Agreement. The Telecommuting Agreement specifies the terms and conditions of the arrangement, which includes verification that the alternate location provides a workspace free from safety and fire hazards. In the agreement, the employee holds the employer harmless from any and all claims from the employee working in the alternate location, except workers' compensation claims. It also documents the responsibilities for both parties and establishes expectations regarding work hours and performance for the employee. It acknowledges the special importance of effective communication between the employee and supervisor and includes provisions for making communication a priority.

The Telecommuting Agreement is signed by the supervisor and telecommuter and does not alter any university policies or contracts under which the employee is already governed.

Before approving a Telecommuting Agreement, units must carefully review each request on its individual merit and circumstances. What may work well for one position or person might not work for another. Success depends on the nature of the work, as well as the communication, trust and management between the supervisor and his or her team. Pilot programs or trial periods may be helpful in determining if telecommuting is an effective arrangement. Units are encouraged to review policies and guidelines before renewing any existing Telecommuting Agreements.

Further questions may be directed to Employee Relations at 517-353-5510.

Helpful links:

- Telecommuting: A Guide for Employees and Supervisors: [http://www.hr.msu.edu/telecommuting](http://www.hr.msu.edu/telecommuting)
- Telecommuting Agreement: [http://www.hr.msu.edu/telecommuting/agreement.htm](http://www.hr.msu.edu/telecommuting/agreement.htm)
- Setting Up a Telecommuting Agreement: [http://www.hr.msu.edu/telecommuting/agreementsteps.htm](http://www.hr.msu.edu/telecommuting/agreementsteps.htm)
What you may have missed this month on our blog...

Your FSA Receipts Deadline is Approaching!

The deadline for turning in 2014 Flexible Spending Account (FSA) receipts is quickly approaching! Here are the FSA important dates to remember for your Dependent Care Spending Account (DCSA) and Health Care Spending Account (HCSA):

- The deadline to use your DCSA funds was December 31, 2014
- The deadline to submit receipts for your DCSA is April 30, 2015
- The deadline to use your HCSA funds is March 15, 2015
- The deadline to submit receipts for your HCSA is April 30, 2015

Important to note: The 2014 Program Year is working in coordination with Meritain Health. You will work with CONEXIS from 2015 forward.

Visit our post for more information and links to the appropriate reimbursement forms.

A Look Into the Past: MSU Retirement Traditions

The tradition of presenting a book to retiring employees is one that MSU HR has carried on for years. Recently, a current HR employee brought in her great-grandfather’s retirement book, circa 1969, to share. Tucked inside the book’s pages were old employee photographs, images depicting the timeless beauty of MSU’s campus, and a letter from President John Hannah. Also included was a pamphlet distributed at MSU’s Seventh Annual Retirement and Service Award Ceremony. This recognition program, an integral part of MSU’s dedication to honoring hard-working employees, still occurs annually each spring. Now, employees are able to select a personal gift that fits their unique preferences.

While many years have passed since the first retirement books were passed out (53, to be exact) it is important to note that MSU has stayed true to its values.

Click here to read the rest of this post and see photos of this 46-year-old retirement book!

Schedule an Office Clean-Out for Recyclemania

RecycleMania is an annual competition that encourages college campuses to rally together in order to increase recycling rates. This year, the event takes place from February 1 to March 28. The MSU Surplus Store and Recycling Center is encouraging faculty and staff to participate in the festivities by scheduling an office clean-out.

View the blog post for more details!
Upcoming Events...

Professional Development Services’ Education Opportunities
To register or get more information on all upcoming HR Professional Development Services (PDS, formerly HRD) courses, look at the SpartansLearn.msu.edu catalog on the Human Resources website at www.hr.msu.edu or go to SpartansLearn.msu.edu. The current catalog is available under the “What’s New” section of the HR website.

Stand Out from the Pack
Strong writing skills can help you come across as more capable, knowledgeable and credible. When you communicate well, verbally and in writing, you are more likely to increase your level of influence and possibly even your chance for promotion. PDS has a number of program options to help you to deliver the message you intend. The following two instructor-led programs get rave reviews from participants. Sign up today in EBS! (Visit http://ebs.msu.edu/ to log in.)

Ten Tactics for Powerful Business Writing -
Thursday, March 5, 8:30 a.m. - noon
• “Very useful information that is directly applicable to my job.”
• “Jackie is a good instructor. Very knowledgeable & personable”.
• “Focused on many areas that will benefit me in my position.”

Communicating Up -
Wednesday, March 25, 8:30 a.m. - noon
• “Very helpful. Applies to all positions.”
• “Pam led the class very well, and inspired very good conversations.”
• “The materials will be very helpful in the future. The cheat sheet is priceless!”

You can also find great resources to build your communication skills in elevateU. Here are a few programs to consider:
• Using E-mail and Instant Messaging Effectively
• Writing under Pressure: Preparing for Success
• Writing for Business
• Business Grammar: Common Usage Errors
• Communicating with Professionalism and Etiquette
• Effective Team Communication

Looking to build other skillsets? Give PDS a call at 517-355-0183 to get more suggestions to meet your needs!

Contact HR
For most HR-related questions or concerns, you should contact our HR Solutions Center at:
• 517-353-4434
• SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu

The following areas of HR can be contacted directly:
• 517-355-0183 or ProDev@hr.msu.edu for questions related to professional development courses.
• 517-353-5510 or hr.er@hr.msu.edu for questions related to unions, grievances, arbitration and employee discipline.