



Debra L. Sears

## 2012 and Health Care: *Plan Ahead*

**Y**ou may be wondering what is in store for you or your business as far as the Healthcare Reform Act and exactly how is that going to affect you. Like anything else there are some that will gain and some that will feel that they didn't. One of the references that we trust is the

Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. They have provided a very user friendly timeline ([healthcarereform.kff.org/timeline.aspx](http://healthcarereform.kff.org/timeline.aspx)) of the scheduled events, detailed explanations of each and their intended purpose and which ones are implemented and which ones have not yet been achieved. Past what's planned to take affect and what is yet to happen there are still key plans to help prepare you and your family for the New Year. This is an ideal time to review your current situation and keep in mind special considerations including:

- HSA planning facts – Compare your plan tool
- Medicare Advantage Plan Disenrollment Period – Fast approaching
- Prescription Drug Expense – Potential savings opportunity
- Small business owner – Wage and benefit calculations

### HSA planning facts – Compare your plan tool

As far as an individual with an HSA (Health Savings Account) for their health insurance, there have also been changes. We strongly advise that if you have already purchased an HSA as your health insurance that you know what contributions that you could still make by 4-15-2012. In 2011 a family may contribute \$6250 (\$520.83 /mo.) to an HSA. If the owner of the plan is age 55 or older the catch up provision allows an additional \$1000 for a total contribution of \$7250. Any money in your HSA account that is not used during a calendar year is rolled over to the following year, so this means your account balance can grow over time. You should also be well advised as to what constitutes a “qualified expense”. The following link best explains in detail all that you would want to know. ([healthsavingsaccountrules.com](http://healthsavingsaccountrules.com)) Have you ever seen a side by side comparison of the benefits, advantages and costs of your current plan and an HSA? There is no better time than now to take a look.

### Medicare Advantage Plan Disenrollment Period – Fast approaching

Anyone on Medicare has gone through their Annual Election Period (AEP) from Oct. 15, 2011 through December 7, 2011 and is ready for the New Year. If you have a Medicare Advantage plan please know that you have a 45 day Medicare Advantage Disenrollment Period (MADP) January 1, 2012 through February 14, 2012, allowing you to disenroll from your current plan and switch to Original Medicare.

### Prescription drug expenses – Potential savings opportunity

Prescription drugs continue to be an expensive

and sometimes confusing issue for any and all of us. The manufactures can change the classification of drugs throughout the year. The costs of the drugs are seemingly changing and becoming more expensive as time goes on. I encourage anyone who is struggling with the cost of a drug that is necessary for their health (and they cannot seem to find an alternative) to contact the pharmaceutical and ask if they offer any relief. For instance a client recently received a “discount card” proven to save hundreds of dollars in a given month. If you are interested in knowing more about this opportunity, I recommend contacting [www.rxreliefcard.com](http://www.rxreliefcard.com) or 800-776-0760. Please note that this is not insurance, but rather just another resource that could help.

### Small business owner – Wage and benefit calculations

If you are a small business owner, providing health insurance benefits for your employees is a must. This “benefit” should be computed into the wage or salary each year, so that you understand your true cost of hiring an employee. The necessity of this offering is to attract and retain a quality workforce team dedicated to making your business the best it can be. There are so many carriers and plan choices, that it is important to know where you are in the marketplace and your options. Searching out the best fit for your employees makes the process a positive experience for both yourself and your employees. Ted Williams is an expert in human resources, management and consulting. We highly recommend he assist you with wage and benefit calculations. Visit his website at [www.The-Williams-Group.com](http://www.The-Williams-Group.com) or call him at 515-274-6899.

Thanks for another great year! We proudly continue to be a top producer in 2011. This is solely attributed to the outstanding clients and referrals that we are able to serve. Without our clients, there would be nothing. It is because of the people we are privileged to meet and work with every day that motivates us to be of our best service. Thank you again for your support. I look forward to meeting more of your family and friends throughout this year! Happy 2012! \*

*Sears Insurance has been recognized again in 2011 as being in the Top 1% for Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Iowa.*

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[www.searsinsurance.info](http://www.searsinsurance.info) • [searsdebra@aol.com](mailto:searsdebra@aol.com)  
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