



## **Insurance is Like an Onion - Many Layers**

by George W. Gonser Jr., MBA, CDHC

I was watching the movie Shrek recently with my children, when Shrek, the main character, said that he was complex with many layers; like an onion. Like an onion, insurance is very complex with multiple layers.

The health insurance marketplace has seen radical changes over the past few years. Many carriers have been flushed out of the marketplace as a "big Three" has emerged and solidified their hold at the top. Through May 2005, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Harvard Pilgrim and Tufts Health Plan are firmly entrenched as the top statewide carriers in Massachusetts. Other carriers such as Fallon Community Health Plan, Health New England, Connecticare, Neighborhood Health Plan and United Health Plans are segmented carriers serving a particular region in the state. United is a rising player due to the size of the company and network growth.

The above-mentioned plans all have excellent reputations for their quality of care and customer service. Harvard Pilgrim, Tufts and Blue Cross and Blue Shield are ranked nationally in the top 10 for their service excellence. Although the cost of insurance is high, the quality is exceptional. As the saying goes; "you get what you pay for."

Over the past few months, we have heard from some MDS members about some different carriers and potentially cheaper pricing. It is imperative that you don't just look at the pricing, but to peel back the layers and look what you are getting for the price. One carrier had made inroads in Massachusetts for their "low cost" health plans. Did you know that this carrier is precluded from selling insurance in multiple states across the US? Did you know that there have been articles written outlining the limited benefits and unhappiness of subscribers? Did you know that this carrier caps the hospital benefit thereby leaving large out of pocket expenses to the insured?

Granted, with the premiums continuing to rise, lower cost alternatives are always worth investigating. Your due diligence is crucial along with your utilizing the resources of MDS Insurance Services Inc. Our experienced staff can avail you of the most up to date information on carriers and insurance plans. While the ultimate decision on your insurance needs fall to you, our expertise can help guide you and inform you so you can make the proper choice that fits your needs.

Back to Shrek for a moment, my youngest child upon hearing the onion reference said to me, "onions make me cry Daddy." Out of the mouths of babes. One point to take away from Shrek, if you do not investigate your insurance plans thoroughly with the help of MDSIS, you too could be crying.

Give MDSIS a call (800-821-6033).

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