



What's New in **BENEFITS & I** **COMPENSATION**

The leading service to keep benefits managers up to date

May 3, 2021

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HRMORNING

Keep Up To Date with the Latest HR News

With **HRMorning** arriving in your inbox, you will never miss critical stories on labor laws, benefits, retention and onboarding strategies.

HRMorning, part of the SuccessFuel Network, provides the latest HR and benefits and employment law news for HR professionals in the trenches of small-to-medium-sized businesses. Rather than simply regurgitating the day's headlines, **HRMorning** delivers actionable insights, helping HR execs understand what HR trends mean to their business.

Help employees be more than satisfied with their benefits

■ *If they don't understand them, they won't use them*

Do your employees truly understand the benefits you offer?

There are reports going around that say a good portion of employees don't understand their benefits. (*See the April 14 issue.*) And that's not good because if they don't understand them, they won't use them. And that spells dollars lost for firms.

What do you do?

First off, don't get frustrated. It's not all bad news. Your efforts are paying off.

In fact, 63% of 900 part- and full-time workers age 21 to 64 said

they were satisfied with their health and wellness benefits, according to the Workplace Wellness Survey conducted by the Employee Benefits Research Institute (EBRI) and Greenwald Research.

And it gets even better. The number of employees who are "extremely" or "very satisfied" with their health insurance plans went up from 49% in 2018 to 55% in the summer of 2020 – yes, during the pandemic.

This is good news. But are you OK with "satisfied?"

There's still a good portion of

(Please turn to Satisfied ... Page 2)

FEDERAL GUIDELINES

Do you need to change any travel restrictions?

On April 2, the CDC updated its travel restrictions for fully-vaccinated people. The good news is they can travel with little risk.

This new recommendation is based on the latest studies that assessed the "real-world effects" of vaccinations.

Some clarifications

Employees can travel only if they're "fully vaccinated" – that's *two weeks* past their last dose of the vaccine.

Once they qualify, they can travel in the U.S. without COVID-19 testing and without post-quarantining, if they continue to follow the safety precautions of wearing a mask, avoiding crowds, socially distancing,

and washing hands frequently.

The restrictions for international travel are:

- a pre-COVID-19 test isn't necessary unless required by the destination
- self-quarantine after returning isn't necessary unless required by a state or local jurisdiction
- a negative COVID-19 test result *is* required before boarding a flight to the U.S. and a test three to five days after returning *is* required, and
- safety precautions still need to be taken.

Note: Travel restrictions for unvaccinated people have not changed!

Info: bit.ly/TravelUpdate625

Satisfied ...

(continued from Page 1)

workers who aren't satisfied.

So how can you reach your people who don't understand their benefits and/or aren't satisfied with them?

Fill in the gaps

You fill in the "communication gaps" so your employees understand their benefits and use them.

Two options for doing that: personal advisors and online programs.

Many companies may be tempted to go with online programs since they're less time consuming and cheaper. The study, however found that many employees, especially at small companies, want a live person to talk to and answer their questions.

Why?

It's more personalized – employees get their specific questions answered and feel they can make smarter choices.

If your company is small, and

you're the only HR/Benefits pro, consider offering both options: online

Employees want a live person to talk to about their benefits.

programs for the majority of questions and personalized one-on-one meetings for those who need more info.

Rethink compensation strategies

Adding benefits doesn't always have to mean shelling out a lot of money. Especially, now during the pandemic, employees appreciate companies that show they care about them and their circumstances. And they understand that regular bonuses and raises probably aren't in the cards this year.

The key is having a diverse array of options so there's something for everyone. For example, offering parent support groups for employees who have young kids in school or who are taking care of an elderly parent. For younger employees or those who don't have children, some options are offering virtual personal training, online cooking classes, music concerts, virtual counseling, etc.

Powerful benefits

Offering caregiving support and resources is a powerful benefit. It can be the difference between whether an employee has to quit their job or accepts your job offer.

And don't pull back on mental health benefits. December had the lowest levels of employee well-being since COVID-19 hit, according to the Mental Health Index by Total Brain and the National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions.

In today's world, comprehensive and unique benefits are key to maintaining and attracting talent.

Info: bit.ly/wellbeing625

SHARPEN YOUR BENEFITS JUDGMENT

This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

■ Employee with a back injury fired for not doing her job

"I wanted to meet with you today to see how we can help you get back on track," said Benefits Manager Betty Murphy. "I know you and your manager had words."

"She's just being ridiculous," said Colleen Rider, a long-time employee. "She keeps hounding me about leaving early. She knows I have a back injury, and now I have physical therapy, doctor's appointments, massages, etc. When else am I supposed to go?"

"Preferably, during your lunch hour or after work," said Betty. "But if you have to leave early, you need to tell your manager in advance."

"We're happy to accommodate you, but you have to work with your manager," said Betty. "She also said your aren't selling the new line."

No restrictions

"I've been selling the same line for years, and now she wants me to sell the new line that's way more technical," said Colleen. "And some clients are two hours away. My back can't take it."

"First off, the line you've been selling is being phased out because it's outdated. And your doctor said you didn't have any restrictions. All of this has been documented in your reviews."

"I'm gonna put you on a PIP and see if we can't get your performance back up," said Betty.

When Colleen's performance didn't improve, she was let go.

Colleen sued for ADA violations, lost and appealed. Did the company come out on top?

■ *Make your decision, then please turn to Page 6 for the court's ruling.*

HRMORNING'S
What's New in **BENEFITS & COMPENSATION**

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Employers pay big for firing workers and not paying minimum wage

This regular feature highlights recent case settlements, court awards and fines against companies. It serves as a reminder to keep benefits policies in order.

Tomato grower stews over \$337K in penalties

What happened: Backyard Farms LLC in Madison, ME, dismissed U.S. workers it employed through temp agencies so it could hire incoming foreign workers.

What people did: The DOL's Wage and Hour Division investigated and found this violated the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Visa Program and the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act. The tomato grower also paid workers in corresponding jobs lower wages than H-2A workers, which is prohibited. In addition, it failed to offer jobs to U.S. workers who worked the previous year, instead giving those positions to guest workers.

Result: In addition to paying \$245,351 in back wages to 117 workers, the grower was fined \$92,114 in civil money penalties.

Info: bit.ly/TomatoGrower625

Hotel & owner refused to call ambulance for worker

What happened: A worker at a Holiday Inn Express & Suites hotel in Waller, TX, told his employer he felt ill due to carbon monoxide exposure and asked him to call an ambulance. The employer refused and fired the worker when he returned from the hospital.

What people did: OSHA filed a suite on behalf of the employee alleging that the hotel's operator, All Seasons Hospitality and Investments LLC, and its owner, Tanvir Shahmohd, fired the worker for engaging in protected activity.

Result: The suit that was filed on March 25, 2021, asks the court

to order the defendants to comply with OSHA's anti-retaliation provisions and reinstate the employee. It also requires them to pay back wages, interest, compensatory and punitive damages, and other remedies.

Info: bit.ly/Hotel625

Restaurant didn't pay workers for all their hours

What happened: Rio Bravo Mexican Restaurant in Gulf Breeze, FL, didn't keep track of and pay for all the hours its servers worked which lead to a minimum wage violation.

What people did: The DOL's Wage and Hour Division found that rather than paying servers when their shifts began, the employer didn't pay them until their first customers arrived. It also failed to pay required overtime. Instead, it paid semi-monthly without determining if servers worked overtime in a single workweek.

Result: The restaurant will pay \$19,008 in wages to 24 workers.

Info: bit.ly/Restaurant625

Plastering company cheated workers out of OT

What happened: Platinum Plastering in Las Vegas failed to pay piece rate workers overtime at one-and-a-half times their regular rates of pay when they worked more than 40 hours per week.

What people did: The investigation found the underpaid piece rate employees worked more than 45 hours per week on average. The law requires employers to pay overtime at time-and-one-half workers' regular rates for hours worked beyond 40 in a week.

Result: Platinum Plastering will pay \$137,174 in back wages to 156 employees.

Info: bit.ly/Plastering625

Why wellness programs are essential for returning to work

Not long ago, employers were wondering how they were going to transition the business to virtual. Now, they're wondering how they can bring employees back.

While many people are excited to return to normal, a lot of employees have anxiety about returning to work. So many have become comfortable working from home, not having a commute and spending more time with their families that getting them to want to come back will be tough.

3 trendy wellness services

One way to ease the transition back is to focus on employee wellness. This last year has been challenging, and has shined the spotlight on mental health. It's critical to continue to support your employees, even after the pandemic.

Here are three wellness services you might want to consider offering.

1. **Create social circles.** Let your employees help support one another. You can start a dialogue about stress and anxiety, then help connect workers struggling with these issues. If several people are nervous about returning to the office, let them discuss this and exchange tips.
2. **Ask your employees directly.** Wondering just how many are suffering from return to work anxiety? Ask your people how they're feeling about it, what their concerns are and how you can help. This will also give you an idea of how many employees would be interested in the wellness program.
3. **Embrace digital tools.** Since in-person health fairs and screenings are out for now, explore all your digital options. Provide employees with videos and interactive content on stress and anxiety, as well as resources like virtual counseling. SelfHelpWorks and LifeSpeak are very popular digital tools.

Info: bit.ly/wellness625

Musculoskeletal costs predicted to triple in 2021: Tips for easing impact

Historically, the U.S. spends more on musculoskeletal (MSK) treatments than anything else. And you'd better get ready because the costs is projected to jump three times its normal increase in 2021, according to Goodpath's MSK Cost Projections for 2021.

The reason for this massive jump is three fold:

- treatments were postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic
- employees' conditions got worse because they weren't treated right away and now they're going to cost more to treat, and
- poor ergonomic work stations at home coupled with less activity and exercise lead to physical deterioration.

Plus, employees with MSK issues may have a drop in productivity and miss work in the not-to-distant future due to their issues.

Address issue for healthier people

It's important that employers don't wait until we've gotten past the

pandemic to mitigate employees' MSK issues. While we're seeing light at the end of the tunnel, we're not out of the pandemic woods yet.

And it's not just to cut down on your healthcare costs. More than anything else, it's to help employees be happier, healthier versions of themselves.

Happy, healthy employees are more productive. And addressing MSK issues helps prevent more serious conditions and procedures in the future.

What you can do now

Here are a few thing you can do to help employees:

- encourage them to seek treatment and stop delaying it
- help them set up an ergonomically correct work station in the office or at home
- remind them to stretch every hour, take breaks, go for walks, and
- offer online fitness classes.

Info: bit.ly/MSKissues625

How a 'Bat Signal' will help the team communicate better

If you're a comic, movie or television fan, you know who Batman is. And you'll know in fictional times of crisis, police call on Batman for help by projecting his signature bat symbol in the sky.

It's a tool that can help your benefits team – and colleagues or departments you work with often – communicate more effectively.

According to Daniel Markovitz, author of *The Conclusion Trap*, your "Bat Signal" helps employees recognize the difference between an issue and true emergency – and respond accordingly.

Without a "Bat Signal," people often waste time checking every digital platform (and even the grapevine) on issues that don't deserve the attention.

Set up a communication protocol to help everyone understand what needs attention when. For instance, for true emergencies, make calls and drop tasks. For less urgent issues, use Slack and expect responses within hours. For information sharing, use email and don't expect responses.

Source: tinyurl.com/batsignal625.

Virtual water cooler feel cold? Time to warm it up again

If you've worked remotely (full- or part-time) this past year, you might miss the organic conversations that pop up around the water cooler. Or coffee pot. Or local bar.

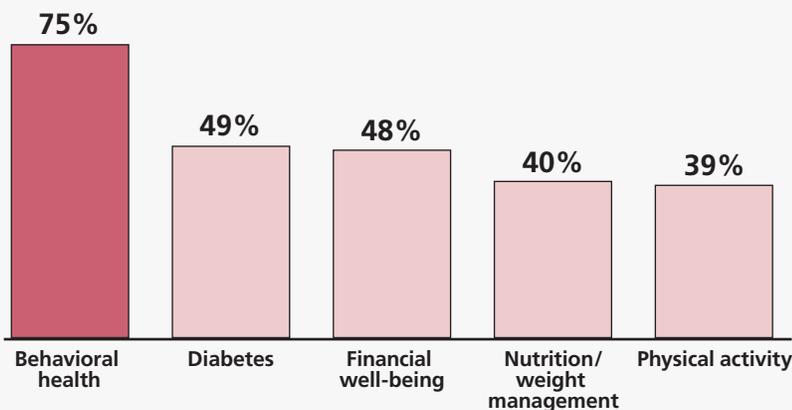
Worse, you might miss some great ideas and information sharing that come from those chats. So now's a good time to rev up the virtual water cooler.

One way: Create a standing watercooler room in the app or virtual platform your team uses most. Keep it "open" for employees to drop in to informally say, "Hi," take a break and talk about whatever they want.

Source: *Let's Grow Leaders*, tinyurl.com/cooler625

Benefits employees need

What are your top 5 well-being priorities for 2021?



Source: *Mercer's Low Health Benefits Costs Growth in 2020*, bit.ly/Wellbeing625

Firms want to make sure they're employees are getting the benefits they need, that's why telehealth is going to play an even bigger role in 2021.

Our readers come from a broad range of companies, both large and small. In this regular section, three of them share success stories you can adapt to fit your needs.

1 **Identified training for managerial candidates**

C suite leadership was concerned about the productivity of our front line teams.

At the same time, we were struggling to find the right people for mission critical mid-level and front line supervisor roles because we had to recruit outside the organization.

Upskilling plan

Clearly our organization's skill development plan needed some fine tuning.

We put our heads together and identified the skills gaps in our workforce that may be holding back otherwise qualified employees from career advancement:

- spreadsheet software fluency and other digital/technical skills
- advanced project management skills
- consistent clear communication of expectations
- providing feedback with emotional intelligence
- coaching, and
- how to successfully interview people.

From there, we researched on-demand training content we found to be engaging and came up with some learning pathway solutions.

After we made leadership video "playlists" available to existing managers and other interested employees, we were able to do a lot more promoting from within.

With more of our people equipped to take on new roles, our manager succession plan is better defined.

(Dean Pichee, Founder & CEO, BizLibrary, as presented during the BambooHR Virtual Summit)

**REAL
PROBLEMS
REAL
SOLUTIONS**

2 **Support for lingering COVID-19 issues**

The pandemic caused unprecedented levels of employee stress and anxiety, plus an increase in self-medicating substance use.

Also, one in five workers that survive being ill with COVID-19 develop a mental illness.

Even with vaccines in distribution, we expect mental health struggles to persist, potentially impacting productivity and the bottom line.

Because employees need to be

able to bring their full selves to work, having a workplace mental health support system in place will continue to be essential.

Getting started

Ways to show you care include posting employee assistance program mental health support links on the company intranet and holding informal "brown bag" education sessions for workers and managers on topics like:

- symptoms of mental health distress

- mindfulness
- relaxation, and
- stress management.

Talking about mental wellness and encouraging social connectedness with virtual team activities like happy hours, cooking classes and fitness classes has been well received by the workforce.

(Rachael Cooper, senior program manager, National Safety Council [NSC], as presented during the NSC State of Response and Future World of Work Virtual Summit)

3 **Considering remote work beyond COVID-19**

Staffing was the biggest challenge of the coronavirus pandemic.

Everybody's had to work from home at some point and it caused some employees, especially the ones with children, to request a reduction in hours because they were struggling with work-life balance.

Others kept working full-time, but had to stagger their hours to get their work done.

Some people are less effective

working from home and preferred to be in the office.

With all these different needs, we had to have a system of tracking where our staffers were working and when.

Schedule spreadsheets

We created collaborative weekly cloud spreadsheets so everybody knows who's in the office, who's working remotely and who may need someone to cover for them.

Also, our office phone system allows people to make important

availability messages visible to all, such as, "I'm out till 3:30."

Although some co-worker collaboration gets lost when we don't have everybody on site, scheduling flexibility is going to be crucial even if all our people get vaccinated against COVID-19.

As a result, whenever things start looking more normal, we'll probably allow our people to work from home at least one day a week.

(Julie Bennett, vice president of finance, First West Insurance, Bozeman, MT)

SALARY PRACTICES

4 benefits of pay transparency

The idea of allowing employees to see what all their colleagues earn can sound controversial and potentially problematic. A lot of employers worry it could cause resentment in the workplace.

Because of these fears, only about 17% of employers practice pay transparency.

Not only are the majority of companies not open about salary, but 75% of workers say they're discouraged from discussing pay, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

But there are so many benefits to being transparent about pay, including achieving equal pay by allowing women to see what they should be earning.

Should you be transparent?

Here are a few other reasons you should consider implementing a pay transparency policy.

1. It builds trust and teamwork. A lot of employees feel they're underpaid by their employers, leading to mistrust and low levels of loyalty. Being transparent about pay can help change that.

Employers can show candidates the typical salary range for their position from the very beginning, so everyone knows they're getting a fair deal.

And higher trust naturally leads to better teamwork. When everyone feels more trust and loyalty for the company, they'll work harder, and work well together.

2. It increases diversity. Simply put, pay transparency policies promote equal opportunity. It's hard to underpay an employee when they can clearly see they're not earning an equal salary.

Being transparent will naturally lead to more diverse candidates applying for the job – they already know they won't have to deal with pay discrimination.

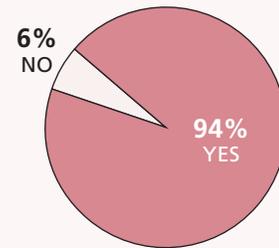
3. It increases performance. When employees' salaries are on display, it holds them accountable, and they work harder. They want to show their colleagues that they earn what they make, so everyone pulls their weight.

4. It improves overall culture. Overall, pay transparency will improve company culture and keep your people around for the long haul.

Employees trust the company not

WHAT BENEFITS EXECS SAID

Is your firm focused on creating a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment?



Source: 2021 HR Trends Report by McLean & Company

Most firms got the message – DEI is important to employees. In 2020, 25% weren't focused on it, and this year it's significantly less. And those who aren't, will likely experience higher turnover.

(Each issue of WNB&C contains a current survey to give benefits officers insight into what their peers nationwide are thinking and doing.)

to be pulling a fast one on them, and they'll hang around longer because of it. They'll also enjoy working with colleagues who are just as productive and dedicated as them.

Not to mention, your company will have a more diverse workforce, and a minuscule risk of encountering any unequal pay lawsuits.

Info: bit.ly/transparency625

SHARPEN YOUR JUDGMENT – THE DECISION

(See case on Page 2.)

Yes. The appeals court said that the reasons the company gave for terminating Colleen – including not taking the initiative to learn about new products – were documented in performance reviews before she was fired.

Colleen's lawyer argued that the reasons the company gave were a pretext for firing her because of her allegedly disabling back injury. They also wanted her to drive distances she wasn't physically able to do.

The company, however, pointed out Colleen had a tendency to leave work early for personal appointments – despite her supervisor asking her to do it during lunch or at least let her know in advance when she was leaving.

It also brought up that she refused to learn about and sell new products due to changes in the market. And that

the doctor signed her back in to work with no restriction – not even driving durations.

And since her past few performance reviews reflected these problems were ongoing, they placed her on a PIP and nothing ever changed.

The court then said no reasonable jury could conclude that she was fired because of a disability.

Analysis: Economic priorities can dictate change

As economic priorities change, businesses must change their priorities. This case confirms that employers can expect staff to stay on top of these changes – even if this means they have to take on more responsibility and/or learn new skills.

The case also shows how proper documentation can help rebut a wrongful discharge claim.

Cite: *Stelter v. Wisconsin Physicians Service Insurance Corp.*, 950 F.3d 488 (7th Cir. 2020). *Dramatized for effect.*

How primary care's role in employee healthcare benefits is evolving

■ Time to consider a hybrid collaborative care strategy

Primary medical care is transforming into integrative “whole person” care. It can potentially shore up gaps in the healthcare system.

A consumer-centric upgrade over the legacy healthcare model, whole person care involves traditional interaction between provider and patient augmented with devices like blood glucose monitors and connected scales.

Not only is it tailored to the employee, technology like a virtual front door removes barriers to necessary care and support.

Where it counts

Because half of adults 18-49 haven't visited a primary care doctor in the last 18 months – mainly because of long wait times – many workers aren't taking advantage of benefits that come from a relationship with a healthcare provider, namely:

- better quality of life
- staying up to date on preventive screenings, and
- early detection of chronic disease.

Employees are given a more active role in their health.

Speaking of chronic disease, did you know employees managing diabetes are likely to have another serious condition that could double the overall cost of their care management?

According to medical and pharmacy claims data on diabetic workers:

- 85% are overweight or obese
- more than half (56%) have high blood pressure, and
- 21% have an unattended mental health condition.

With whole person care, these details are less likely to fall through the cracks and employees are given a more active role in their health.

Digitally enabled

If someone needs a cardiologist, instead of being given a paper and told “good luck,” there's a centralized care team to support them at every step of the journey.

If there's a diagnosis of prediabetes or elevated cholesterol, the care team sets them up with services, such as:

- chronic care coaches
- self help content
- specialist care, and
- mental health providers and content.

The team is able to securely share medical records and access the results of visits.

Best approach?

Whole person care reduces healthcare costs. Also, healthy workers are productive workers.

Models include per employee, per month with visit fees, capitated payment with an all-inclusive rate, and per employee, per month value based care with degrees of participating member payments.

Now's a good time to check in with your insurance carrier to discuss what the best fit is for your organization.

(Dr. Adam Travis, vice-president of clinical programs, Teladoc Health, as presented during the webinar The Role of Primary Care in a Whole Person Benefits Strategy)

Case Study:

WHAT WORKED, WHAT DIDN'T

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

■ ERISA: Key areas that require special attention

If you offer retirement, health and welfare plans, make sure your compliance is dead on. The DOL is stepping up its oversight and penalties.

Check your ERISA knowledge by deciding whether the following statements are *True* or *False*. Then check the answers below.

1. Plan administrators must file Form 5500 – part of ERISA's reporting and disclosure process of employee retirement and welfare benefit plans – no later than one month after the end of the plan year.
2. All participating employees must have a summary plan description (SPD) within 90 days of coverage.
3. Compliance failure with the CHIP notifications can land firms some of the largest ERISA fines.
4. Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC) must be provided by plan sponsors within 90 days of enrollment.

ANSWERS

- Info:** bit.ly/ERISA625
1. *False.* Form 5500 must be filed with the DOL no more than seven months after the end of the plan year. If it's not filed in time, it'll cost your company \$2,259 for every day it's overdue!
 2. *True.* The SPD is a detailed guide to the plan and how it operates and must include employee eligibility terms, claims procedures and plan funding. Participants must also be given an updated SPD every five years if the plan is amended. And the insurance carrier's Certificate of Coverage *can't* be used as a sub.
 3. *True.* The fine is \$120 per person per day. Employers that don't distribute the notice for a year and have a few hundred employees can see fines in the millions.
 4. *True.* The SBC also has to be provided to all employees during open enrollment.

■ Answers to the quiz

Can you offer your own COVID-19 vaccine clinic?

Considering offering an onsite COVID-19 vaccine clinic?

The CDC only recommends it if you have:

- a large number of workers on site with predictable schedules
- the ability to enroll with the local jurisdiction's immunization program as a vaccination provider, including appropriately training staff, or using an enrolled vaccination provider, and
- a facility with a large enough space for a vaccination clinic while maintaining social distancing through the entire process, from screening to post-vaccination observation.

If you feel your organization qualifies, the CDC recommends contacting the health department in your area for help and guidance.

Info: bit.ly/VaccineClinic625

Parental leave: Learn from Volvo Cars' endeavor

If your company is looking to offer benefits that are all inclusive, shrink the gender gap, and are great tools for retaining and attracting talent, check out Volvo Cars' new offering.

As of April 1, 2021, the car company is offering its 40,000-plus global workforce – no matter what position held – the “Family Bond” policy.

The new paid parental leave benefit gives all employees with at least one year's service 24 weeks of leave at 80% base pay by default. The leave applies to either parent and can be taken anytime within the first three years of parenthood.

It includes all legally registered parents, including adoptive, foster care and surrogate parents, as well as non-birth parents in same-sex couples.

The auto maker did a study on its pilot program and found some obstacles to it were concerns around the impact on teams, long-term career opportunities and stigmas about what's expected of fathers in the

workplace and at home.

To counter that and make parental leave for both parents the new norm, the firm focused on communicating about its parental leave policy more effectively. It also made the 24-weeks parental leave a pre-selected option, making it more likely people will stick with it then. It also removed ambiguous language, such as “up to 24 weeks.”

Info: bit.ly/ParentalLeave625

2020 Tip final rule: Some portions got approval

It seems that the DOL has finally agreed on parts of the 2020 Tip final rule after much review.

The following two portions of the 2020 Tip final rule implementing the 2018 Consolidated Appropriations Act will go into effect:

- Prohibiting employers, including supervisors and managers, from keeping tips received by workers, regardless of whether the employer takes a tip credit. This establishes significant protections for tipped employees.
- The ability of an employer that doesn't take a tip credit to include non-tipped workers, such as cooks and dishwashers, in nontraditional tip-sharing agreements to boost their earnings.

We will keep you updated as more unfolds.

Info: bit.ly/Tipped625

Unpaid leave: Reasonable accommodations or not?

Is unpaid leave considered a reasonable accommodation for the Americans with Disability Act (ADA)?

Yes, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) recently published guidance that states unpaid leave is a form of reasonable accommodations.

However, it also pointed out an indefinite leave with no reasonable estimate of return to work is considered an undue hardship.

Info: bit.ly/UnpaidLeave625

HOT WEBSITES

Who has salary question bans?

It's a good idea not to ask about salary. Many states and local governments are banning it. They say it leads to disparities in pay. This [Salary.com](https://www.salary.com) website shows who has state-wide bans and local bans.

Click: bit.ly/SalaryHistBans625

101 Low-cost wellness ideas

The past year has been tough, and some employees are struggling. Need some low-cost wellness ideas? Check out this [ModaHealth.com](https://www.modahealth.com) website for 101 low-cost ideas!

Click: bit.ly/WorksiteWellness625

COVID-19: What you can do

The CDC has an updated web page on what you can do now that your fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and what you should keep doing.

Click: bit.ly/FullyVaccinated625

If you have a benefits-related question, email it to Renee Cocchi at: rcocchi@HRMorning.com

LIGHTER SIDE

When you're living in a pandemic, pundemics help!

We've lightened the mood before with pandemic jokes, but who couldn't still use a good chuckle?

So here are more pundemics from [Fatherly.com](https://www.fatherly.com) you can share to boost employees' mental health:

- Ran out of toilet paper and started using lettuce leaves. Today was just the tip of the iceberg, tomorrow *romaines* to be seen.
- Finland just closed its borders. You know what that means. No one will be crossing the finish line.
- What did the barista call her face mask? A coughy filter.
- I would make a COVID-19 joke, but it would be tasteless.
- Why hasn't anyone in Antarctica contracted COVID-19? They're so ice-o-lated.

Click: bit.ly/Pundemics625