

# DeltaUpdate

Spring 2002

## Expatriate Dental Program: Dental Goes Global

**O**n January 1, 2002, Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota launched its **Expatriate Dental Program**, a new global dental benefit program that allows multi-national companies to

offer employees of U.S. citizenship who are living or working overseas the same dental plan benefits as their stateside colleagues. The program, the first of its kind in the nation, was built in partnership with Paris-based Europ Assistance, a subsidiary of Assicurazioni Generali.

"We are pleased to offer this value-added service to our customers," said Michael Walsh, president and CEO of Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota. "There's an obvious demand for the

**Multi-national group customers can now offer overseas workers dental benefits similar to those of their stateside colleagues, and also have their entire dental benefit program run through one administrator.**

program, as more U.S.-based companies globalize their operations."

The Expatriate Dental Program was built in partnership with Europ Assistance, the same company we've partnered with for the Emergency International Dental Service offered with all Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota products. The network of almost 700 dentists operates in more than 135 countries, and continues to grow based on customer needs. Europ Assistance requires that dentists undergo a credentialing process,  
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## Now, *that's* Value

**I**n a time of economic uncertainty and rising medical and dental costs, Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota is acutely aware of what it means to offer value to our customers. We understand that providing value goes beyond price — it's an entire way of doing business and servicing groups and subscribers. At Delta, value means:

### Competitively priced products

Dental costs are rising — we all know it. Recent Delta Dental claims trends have indicated that dental care costs in Minnesota have risen by approximately 10 percent in the last year, as compared to national dental costs that have increased by seven to eight percent in the same period.

Nationally, dental care costs are rising faster than both the consumer price index (CPI) and the cost of medical care. Between 1990-1999, while CPI for all goods and services rose by 27.5 percent and the CPI for medical care increased by 53.9 percent, the CPI for dental care, comparatively, increased by 58.7 percent.

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The shrinking supply of dentists in the state, combined with greater overhead expenses for lab fees and dental office staff, have led to significant increases in the overall cost of dental services. Despite this challenge, the variety of our product offerings allows us to meet the economic needs of a broad range of employers. We also offer emergency international dental services to employees working or traveling abroad.

### Extraordinary Customer Service

Among our most successful ventures in recent years was the establishment of our Customer Service Center on the Iron Range in Gilbert, Minnesota, which opened in late 2000. The overall success of the Iron Range experience resulted in an agreement with the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) to double the size of the building in Gilbert to accommodate an additional 120 Customer Service employees.

Our Customer Service representatives (CSRs) in Iowa, Eagan and Gilbert field more than 5,000 calls per day from members,

**VALUE.**

- Competitively priced products.
- Extraordinary customer service.
- World-class dental networks.
- Sophisticated cost-containment systems.
- 2001 group and customer savings: \$55 million.

Now that's value.  
That's Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota.  
Innovative oral healthcare management.

**DELTA DENTAL**  
Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota  
[www.deltadental.org](http://www.deltadental.org)

Illustration © 1999 Delta Dental of Minnesota

groups and dental offices, with an average answer speed of 15 seconds and less than a two percent rate of call abandonment. Customer Service calls are

also monitored, and each representative is graded for quality assurance. In January 2002, the average CSR quality rating was 93.5 percent.

### Value-driven dental networks

Currently, more than 80 percent of the licensed practicing dentists in Minnesota participate in our statewide participating (PAR) network. Using sophisticated data-analysis, Delta is able to identify dentists who manage the delivery of oral healthcare based on individual patient needs rather than on pre-determined treatments or insurance contract benefit

limits. Using dentists like these creates cost savings and enhanced customer value. We work to ensure the right dental services are provided at the best price in

a manner consistent with current oral disease patterns and scientifically-based dental practice.

### Sophisticated cost-containment systems

A recent national survey showed Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota had one of the lowest operational costs among Delta plans. Thanks to our operational efficiencies, our overall administrative costs are almost 35 percent below the average Delta plan.

### 2001 customer savings of \$55 million

Both locally and nationally, Delta's participating dentists agree to accept our reimbursement as payment in full. The "Hold Harmless" agreement limits patient out-of-pocket expenses — any portion of a dentist's fee higher than the approved amount cannot be charged to employees and/or groups. Last year alone, our clients saved more than \$55 million by receiving services from Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota participating network providers (based on approximately \$625 million in 2001 claims). □

## Expatriate Dental Program continued ...

ensuring they meet all professional requirements in their home country, before being accepted into the new international network.

Through the Expatriate Program, employees who work or live overseas can share dental benefit plans similar to those of their stateside colleagues. Finding a dentist outside the U.S. is easy with the Expatriate Plan. Members can locate dentists belonging to the

international network by calling Delta's International Customer Service Department or by consulting a directory of participating dentists, also available online at [www.deltadental.org](http://www.deltadental.org). Employees can make a dental appointment through an international customer service agent or by calling the dentist directly.

Dentists participating in the program may submit claims directly to Delta Dental.

In situations where the patient pays for the procedure up front, they can expect reimbursement for the procedure in accordance with their benefit plan in three weeks.

"We have kept administration of the Expatriate Program simple and straightforward in an effort to make it user-friendly to both benefit administrators and employees based overseas," said Mark Moksnes, executive vice president, Sales

and Marketing. "This new program will undoubtedly relieve the extra costs and inconvenience companies currently face when dealing with multiple benefit plans for employees based overseas. We're pleased to offer it to our new and existing group customers."

For more information on the Expatriate Dental Program, contact your Delta Dental Sales and Marketing representative. □

# Learn More about HIPAA and Other Upcoming Healthcare Legislation



## **Q** What is HIPAA?

**A** The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 is a federal initiative that establishes standards for the privacy of healthcare information and for electronic transactions between healthcare entities, such as claim information submitted electronically from a dental office or enrollment information submitted from a group to Delta Dental. HIPAA is intended to be implemented in stages over several years.

## **Q** What is Delta's role with this initiative?

**A** Delta has launched a long-term, enterprise-wide project to ensure that our business is in compliance with HIPAA standards. We are in the process of thoroughly evaluating our systems to comply with the new procedure coding,

electronic transmission and privacy standards that become effective in 2002 and 2003. By the end of 2002, Delta plans to have completed work with providers who send electronic claims and groups who send electronic enrollment data. By April 2003, we will have implemented Privacy standards, working with self-insured groups and revising their Summary Plan Descriptions (SPDs). We are also monitoring new guidelines as they are released.

## **Q** How can I learn more about HIPAA?

**A** For more information about HIPAA regulations, visit the official HIPAA Web site at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/admn-simp/>. Delta Dental cannot advise you of your individual responsibilities resulting from HIPAA regulations. We recommend that concerned businesses seek counsel for

individual advice on the steps required to comply with the legislation and the rules and regulations adopted to implement HIPAA. We will continue to communicate with you on how Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota plans to achieve HIPAA compliance as we move forward with our HIPAA project.

## **Q** What is Delta doing about ERISA amendments that affect claims and summary plan descriptions (SPDs)?

**A** The Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) requires plan administrators to give plan participants certain information including plan rules, financial information, and documents on the operation and management of the plan in a specified format. This will require changes to the information contained in SPDs. The legislation

also includes regulations on claim turnaround time.

Delta Dental has formed a team to ensure compliance with the ERISA amendment regarding claim practices, as well as the amendment regarding content of SPDs. The team consists of management from all affected business units and meets twice per month. Required changes will be implemented by the due dates of both amendments.

Work has already begun to modify content of SPDs. As for the claim practices, we will revise our policies and procedures according to the requirements, and conduct staff training on these changes.

Since Delta Dental is already compliant with Minnesota's "prompt pay" claims law, we don't believe drastic changes will be necessary. □

# What is a Dental Plan?

*A new value-added service for subscribers! The following article has been written specifically for employees, and may be reprinted in its entirety in your employee newsletter, distributed to employees or posted on your internal Web site. For an electronic version, or to suggest future topics of interest to your employees, please e-mail [lgilbert@deltadental.org](mailto:lgilbert@deltadental.org).*



**H**elping you understand your dental benefits is one way to ensure you get the most appropriate and cost-effective care. We've compiled some commonly asked questions and answers to some misconceptions to provide you with a clearer understanding of this important benefit.

## Do dental plans differ from health plans?

Yes, they do. The largest difference between dental coverage and a health plan

is this: Most medical plans are designed to cover services that are medically necessary to treat specific conditions or diseases. This

allows you the flexibility to respond to your individual medical needs and treatment requirements to avoid significant financial burden.

Additionally, your employer and/or healthcare provider may be mandated by law to provide you with certain coverage levels.

## Did you know?

- 86.5 percent of respondents to our 2001 Subscriber Satisfaction Survey sample indicated they were either “some-what” or “very” satisfied with their Delta Dental plan. 87.8 percent rated the overall quality of



Delta as being “good” or better. 91.2 percent indicated that Delta’s claims processing quality was “good” or better.

- Once again, Delta Dental has completed Standard & Poor’s and A.M. Best’s

comprehensive analysis and emerged with the highest possible ratings. Our strong market position and consistent significant growth earned us an “A” rating from A.M. Best. Delta also received one of the highest ratings of any dental plan in the country — an “AA-” — from Standard & Poor’s.

- More than 2,500 dentists and specialists — more than 80 percent of licensed, practicing providers —



Your dental plan serves a different purpose. Your employer offers a dental benefit plan to provide financial assistance to meet general dental care needs. Because dental services are less costly and more predictable than medical care, dental plans typically feature a specific set of benefits and coverage parameters and are not always designed to address each individual's specific dental treatment needs.

### **How does Delta hold down the cost of dental care for our customers?**

All of the dentists who participate in a Delta network agree to accept our reimbursement as payment in full for covered services. This amount is usually less than the fee you would pay for that service if purchased without Delta coverage. Also, "hold harmless" provisions in Delta's contracts with dentists mean that when you see a participating Delta dentist, you cannot be billed for the balance of the fee the

dentist would normally have charged for that service.

### **How is the actual benefit plan determined?**

Your employer determines the combination and extent of dental benefits for your program. Delta is responsible for administering your plan, making appropriate payment according to the plan benefits and maintaining the integrity of our various provider networks. If you are represented by a union, the combination and extent of dental benefits provided is usually negotiated via the collective bargaining process.

### **Dental vs. health care: the fundamental differences.**

Dental conditions are rarely fatal and largely preventable, and dental services are less costly and often predictable.

### **What is a dental plan designed to do?**

Dental benefit plans are better characterized as financial assistance plans

than as insurance. Unlike true insurance plans, which are designed to protect against major loss, dental benefit plans provide financial assistance to you and your family to encourage regular visits to your dentist, which are essential to maintaining oral health. Most dental plans are structured to provide coverage that meets basic diagnostic and preventive dental needs. Depending on your oral health circumstances, your dental plan may or may not cover all of your needs, and should not be the sole determinant of the dental treatment you receive.

### **If my dentist does not participate in the Delta network, can I still go to him/her?**

You always have the option to see a nonparticipating dentist. However, if dental services are rendered by a non-participating dentist, Delta cannot guarantee that he or she will accept the allowable charge as payment in full (and dentists

usually do not). The dentist may bill for the difference between what Delta pays and what he/she charges for the service, resulting in higher out-of-pocket costs for you.

Delta is committed to maintaining a network of dentists that provides top quality, yet affordable dental care for all. Our services, such as professional review of claims, help ensure the services you receive are within generally accepted standards of dental care and are covered by your plan. Delta has worked hard to contain costs and provide affordable dental care for all. □

currently participate in the Minnesota Premier (PAR) Network.

- A recent national survey of Delta Plans showed Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota had an operating expense of less than 8 percent — almost 35 percent below the average

Delta plan — and one of the lowest among all Delta Dental Plans nationwide.

- In 2001 Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota processed 5,616,127 claims — more than 22,000 a day. □

# 22,000 claims per day



# Community Connections — Creating Oral Healthcare Awareness



**St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly uses story time to “talk teeth” with second graders.**

**D**elta Dental Plan of Minnesota prides itself on providing value to our group customers and their employees. We also have a strong commitment to providing value in our community through education and outreach. Delta Dental is committed to the health and general well being of the communities we serve, donating time, money, and products to help extend access to dental care and improve the oral health of individuals and families in Minnesota and beyond.

Our most recent outreach efforts centered on Children’s Dental Health Month, 2002. We kicked off February, National Children’s Dental Health

Month, with a special visit to Dayton’s Bluff Elementary School. St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly joined St. Paul Schools Superintendent Dr. Patricia Harvey to kick off the program. Mayor Kelly read the story *Arthur’s Tooth* by Marc Brown to second graders, a dental hygienist spoke to the children about good oral health practices, and children received a free oral health care screening through Delta’s program for at-risk children with Children’s Dental Services.

Each child received a bag containing toothpaste, floss, a toothbrush, an education brochure and an ADA coloring book or activity book. Of course, the tooth fairy also attended to

help make the visit more memorable. The month of events also included school visits and parent workshops in Duluth, Gilbert, Virginia, Mt. Iron, Rochester, Austin and Moorhead. “We were pleased to offer parents and their children tools to promote good dental health,” said Michael Walsh, president and CEO, Delta

Dental Plan of Minnesota. “Building healthy habits that can last a lifetime is a critical part of oral healthcare.”

Other activities for Children’s Dental Health Month included an informational booth at the State Capitol on February 12 and an educational “Healthy Smiles” flyer\*, which was sent to every elementary school and Early Childhood Family Education program in Minnesota for a larger distribution to parents. In addition, KARE-11 provided a link to our online educational materials from their Web site. □

*\*The “Healthy Smiles” flyer (shown below) was written specifically for parents, and may be reprinted in its entirety in your employee newsletter, distributed to employees or posted on your internal Web site. For an electronic version, e-mail [lgilbert@deltadental.org](mailto:lgilbert@deltadental.org)*



# Tips for better billing and enrollment records

**A**ccurate and timely enrollment information from your group allows Delta Dental to better respond to member inquiries, process claims correctly and generate accurate billing statements. There are a number of guidelines you can follow to ensure the integrity of your billing and assist us in processing your enrollment request promptly and accurately.

- If your group is made up of 2,000 employees or less, consider Online Enrollment via our Web site (see article on page 8).

## ***If you submit enrollment requests via paper\*:***

- **Use the appropriate Membership Enrollment or Membership Maintenance forms and include the following information:**

- Group Name and Telephone Number
- Group Number and Subgroup Number
- Employee Name, Social Security Number and Date of Birth
- Employee Date of Hire
- Employee Address (for new enrollments only)
- Dependent Name and Date of Birth
- Coverage Start and/or End Dates

Membership Enrollment and Maintenance forms are available on our Web site at [http://www.deltadental.org/content/ben\\_admin.asp](http://www.deltadental.org/content/ben_admin.asp). You may also obtain forms by calling our Supply Line at 651-406-5945 or (800) 906-5250.

*\*Paper enrollment requests are generally completed within five business days of receipt.*

- **Send in complete forms.** Incomplete forms or forms with conflicting information will be returned for correction and re-submission. Delta Dental does not retain a copy of returned items.

- **Do not send enrollment requests with your Subscriber Listing.** Enrollment requests submitted on the Subscriber Listing provided with your bill **will not** be accepted.

- **Complete the entire employer portion of the Membership Enrollment and Maintenance forms.**

- **Review the Membership Enrollment and Maintenance forms to verify subscribers have completed all appropriate sections.**

- **Submit new enrollments, changes or terminations within 30 days of employment or qualifying event.**

- **Do not use other forms and reporting formats for enrollment information without prior approval from Delta Dental.**

- **To avoid delays and ensure correct processing, send all enrollment requests to:**

Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota  
Attn: Enrollment Dept.  
PO Box 330  
Minneapolis MN 55440-0330

- **If you see errors on your monthly Subscriber Listing, submit the proper changes to the Enrollment Department by using either the Membership Enrollment or Membership Maintenance form.**

The eligibility records must be corrected before any changes appear on your bill.

- **Use the 2002 Billing Schedule as a guide.** The Billing Schedule, provided with your

January 2002 bill, will help you determine when your Enrollment or Maintenance forms need to be received by our Enrollment Department to appear on your next Subscriber Listing. To request a copy of the 2002 Billing Schedule, contact the Billing Department at (651) 406-5902 or (800) 906-4702 (toll-free). □



## **Report Cards coming soon!**

**I**n November and December, Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota mailed its 2001 Customer Satisfaction Survey to more than 5,000 group administrators across the State of Minnesota. We appreciate the feedback given by everyone who participated in the survey process.

We have received preliminary survey results, and are extremely excited about the feedback that has come in so far. Look for upcoming communication on how we were “graded” by our group customers. Our report cards will soon be in the mail! □

# Online Enrollment Continues to Grow in Popularity

The continued expansion and enhancement of our Web site, [www.deltadental.org](http://www.deltadental.org), is a top priority at Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota. Throughout 2001, we provided you with updates on our Web site efforts, announcing the launch of our interactive dentist directory, our Online Enrollment application and our claims inquiry function. We are currently working to complete our Benefits Inquiry, and are looking ahead to additional Web projects for the latter part of 2002.

One of our most rewarding efforts was the release of Online Enrollment in August 2001. Our Marketing, Enrollment and Information Technology teams, working closely with a test sample of group customers, designed a simple, efficient system that allows group administrators to directly enter and maintain eligibility information on employees and their dependents over the Internet. The application has proven popular beyond our expectations — in less than six months, more than 400 group administrators and brokers have opted to enroll more than 90,000 employees and dependents via our Web site.

Because Online Enrollment requires no

manual reprocessing of information at Delta Dental, it greatly reduces the turn-around time, efficiency and accuracy of the eligibility system. Group administrators have the ability to enter and view daily additions, changes and terminations to Delta's membership file for their groups and subgroups, as well as to create system-generated summary reports of daily activity. We recommend Online Enrollment for employee groups of 2,000 or less.

Once your group has started using the Online Enrollment application to update and maintain eligibility, Delta is no longer able to process your standard eligibility requests by hand. However, in certain rare circumstances, exceptions will apply (a full set of instructions and exceptions is

included in the Online Enrollment User Guide, which will be distributed to you once you have opted to process eligibility online).

Our account managers and DeltaConnect staff are available to

## Benefits of Online Enrollment

- **Faster access to information for enrollment verification**
- **More accurate premium invoices**
- **Expedites the enrollment process and decreases turn-around time**
- **Maintains cost effective communication between two parties**
- **Increases data accuracy (no re-keying of information by second party)**
- **Reduces follow-up on enrollment requests**
- **Includes online transaction reporting for follow-up or auditing**

offer Online Enrollment demonstrations to groups and brokers who are interested in using this convenient new service. We are also happy to offer demonstrations to brokers who wish to instruct their groups to use the Online Enrollment application. For more information, contact your Delta Dental Sales and Marketing representative. □

### DeltaUpdate

Article ideas and questions from readers are welcome.

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