

St. Johns River Rural Health Network

HHS Secretary Seeks Improvements To Health Care Law

by Julio Ochoa of Health News Florida 10/4/2016



As it enters its seventh year, the Affordable Care Act is facing

challenges, leading some to speculate that the law will have to change in order to survive.

From insurers leaving federal exchanges to problems getting young, healthy consumers enrolled, the Affordable Care Act has had a bumpy ride of late.

Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell acknowledged that changes are needed to improve competition, affordability and access. "In some rural markets and smaller markets there isn't as much competition and we need to take steps to improve that," Burwell said. "And for some people while the subsidies are very generous and create affordability we think there are places for more assistance and help for working families."

In August, Aetna announced that it was pulling out of the public exchanges in Florida. The insurer's exit leaves 44 of Florida's 67 counties with just one provider on the exchange.

Burwell says the Obama administration is working to improve competition and considering a public option that would see the government enter the

marketplace.

Thirty-two U.S. senators recently signed a resolution calling for a public option.

"The public option is a way that we can, in places where there is not competition, make sure that people have choice and options and I think we think that's an approach," Burwell said. "We welcome the opportunity to have the conversation about what are the best ways to create additional competition."

Burwell says gains in enrollment can be made by offering better subsidies for working families and explaining the benefits of health insurance to young people.

"Many of them think about it in terms of just the premiums but people need to think through the issues of the benefits they get in terms of preventative care that's free and also the kinds of things that people want to do in terms of health and nutrition and taking care of themselves and getting access to those services," she said.

Open enrollment begins Nov. 1.



Quote of the Month

To keep the body in good health is a duty...otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.



Buddha

Did you know?

Florida Hospital of Ormond Beach has

Debtors Anonymous

Support Groups?

Contact

386-676-6000



Rural Health Network
Support Connect Improve

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How to handle employee complaints about pay Ed Zalew-

Not all employees in the same job are paid the same.

Wage differences are common based on tenure, experience, education, productivity and other factors.

But even if your reason for a pay differential is justifiable (not based on unlawful discriminatory factors), some employees may complain that they are underpaid.

If an employee complains about unfair pay, you will need to respond — and in many cases, that won't include giving a raise. Your response will likely vary, and may depend in part on whether the employee discovered wage information from a third party or from coworkers.

Websites offering salary data are the most common third-party source of wage information. If an employee cites online data to claim that he or she is underpaid, you might want to explain the apparent discrepancy by addressing a few specific factors that can impact that position.

For example, one website offering free salary information shows that the median pay for a grocery store cashier in Chicago is about \$30,000 per year. Employees may not understand why they are paid less than the “average” (although a median is not the same as an average).

You may need to point out that new hires generally start at the bottom of the scale. The median is not an average wage offered to new hires. Rather, it is the point at which half of workers earn more and half earn less, so it represents employees who are well into their careers.

Learned from coworkers

Employees may also believe that they are underpaid after talking to coworkers about wages. Such discussions are protected by the National Labor Relations Act, and you cannot discipline employees for discussing their pay or the pay of their coworkers.

However, you can explain some justifiable reasons for a discrepancy. These might include:

- **Tenure**— Longer-term employees are usually paid more
- **Prior experience**— Employees with experience from previous jobs may be hired at a higher pay rate
- **Responsibilities**— Even within the same position, some employees may handle additional responsibilities, perhaps helping train new hires
- **Job knowledge**— With tenure and experience comes increased knowledge that may allow an employee to work more efficiently and with less oversight

If an employee complains about unfairly low pay, you might describe some knowledge and skills that the employee could develop to reach a higher pay scale. This could expand into a discussion of career development opportunities, whether growing within the current position (which may have limited potential) or preparing for a new career direction.

Some employees will choose to look for jobs elsewhere, but may learn that starting wage offers are fairly close to their current pay for similar positions. If you are losing valuable employees to competitors,

5 Things to know about:

Ways to Destress

1. Call a friend
2. Meditate
3. DIY massage
4. Stretch
5. Listen to music