



COOK
COUNTY
BENEFITS CONNECT

WINTER 2021

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS QUARTERLY

Update your Beneficiaries

If you've lost a loved one, you understand the importance of having your life insurance beneficiary designations up-to-date. A beneficiary is a person or organization (non-profit or charity) you name in legal documents—like a will or a life insurance policy—to receive all or some of your assets (money and other stuff you own) when you pass away. You can list more than one beneficiary, and you don't have to choose a relative. The primary beneficiary (or beneficiaries) inherit first. If they are no longer living, your assets go to any secondary beneficiaries you have designated.

Beneficiaries can include spouses, children, and other relatives. Alternatively, they can include friends, trusts, charities, and institutions. Because your pet can't sign legal documents or legally own property, you can't name them as a beneficiary. However, you can establish a trust for a pet.

To designate beneficiaries, you will need the full legal name of the individual. You will also need to determine what percentage of your assets will go to each beneficiary if you have more than one listed.

Be aware that beneficiary designations generally become active immediately after death and override any information regarding inherited assets provided in your will.

You can make changes to your beneficiary designations at any time. MetLife is the County's group term life insurance vendor. Go to [metlife.com/mybenefits](https://www.metlife.com/mybenefits) or call 866-492-6983.

The Employee Assistance Program Can Help

No matter where you are on your journey, there are times when a little help can go a long way.

Provided at no cost to you and your household members, the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can support you in achieving your goals and lead to a happier more productive life.

A variety of resources, tools and services are available including a network of licensed professionals providing support for stress, anxiety, grief, substance misuse, relationship concerns and more.

Get support from a coach, attend online programs, access wellness resources and discover ways to develop skills to become more resilient.

Services are completely confidential and available 24 hours, 7 days a week. You can visit www.MagellanAscend.com or call the Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-327-5048.



Magellan
HEALTHSM



CVS pharmacy[®]

Preventing the Flu is More Important than Ever

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's even more important to do everything possible to reduce illness.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), an annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to help protect against flu.

Vaccination has been shown to have many benefits including reducing hospitalizations and even the risk of flu-related death in children.

Millions of people get the flu every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands of people die from flu-related causes.

Employees enrolled in a County medical plan can get a flu vaccine at no cost from your doctor as part of the preventive care services.

Employees can also get a free flu shot at any CVS Pharmacy. Both regular and high dose are available. Visit Caremark.com or download the CVS app to find a pharmacy near you.

Cook County Retirement Plan Monthly Workshop Series

Register to join the monthly workshop series for valuable information that can help you make decisions about planning for and living through retirement.

Enrollment

Join us for a session on the benefits of enrolling and participating in the Cook County Deferred Compensation Plan. Learn about tax deferred savings, investment options available and an overview of our easy and secure online enrollment process.

Every First Wednesday of the month | 12:00 PM CST | [Register now](#)

Asset Allocation

Join us for a session to discuss your options for balancing risk and reward within your investment strategy. We'll talk about how individual goals, risk tolerance and time horizon for investing can be considered, and why they're each important.

Every First Wednesday of the month | 12:00 PM CST | [Register now](#)

Approaching Retirement

Join us for a session about important considerations as you get closer to retirement. We will discuss longevity, income sources, asset consolidation, and required minimum distributions.

Every Third Wednesday of the month | 12:00 PM CST | [Register now](#)

457 Deferred Compensation Plan

The IRS retirement plan deferral limit is \$19,500 in 2021. Employees 50 years and over have the option of deferring an additional \$6,500 through the catch-up deferral provision. This means you may be able to save more money for your retirement! You can login to your account online at www.cookcountycdc.com to make deferral changes.

For any questions in regarding the 457 Deferred Compensation Plan, please contact Nationwide Customer Service at 877-677-3678 or visit www.cookcountycdc.com for more information.



Annual Enrollment

Getting life insurance through work can be an easy way to protect your family.

Advantages may include:

- Competitive group rates
- Convenient payroll deductions
- Easy access to educational tools

All you have to do is sign up. Eligible employees will receive a mailing to their homes in January with instructions on how to enroll.

2021 Wellness Calendar



<p>JANUARY Work from Home Ergonomics Pandemic Mental Health</p>	<p>FEBRUARY Women's Health</p>	<p>MARCH Colorectal Cancer Awareness Mental Health</p>
<p>APRIL Managing Your Money</p>	<p>MAY Cook County Health Awareness: Tools and Information to Help you Live a Healthier Lifestyle</p>	<p>JUNE Men's Health</p>
<p>JULY Black Mental Health Awareness</p>	<p>AUGUST Diabetes: Healthy Eating on a Budget & Plant-based Eating</p>	<p>SEPTEMBER How to Prepare for Open Enrollment</p>
<p>OCTOBER Open Enrollment</p>	<p>NOVEMBER Managing Your Health Benefits 1</p>	<p>DECEMBER Managing Your Health Benefits 2</p>

Commuter Benefits

Commuter Benefits provide tax savings for your work transportation costs like subway fares, train tickets, and shared rides. By paying for your commute with pre-tax dollars, you reduce your taxable income. As a result of saving your hard-earned cash to pay for this daily cost, you save more on Social Security, FICA, and income tax.

In 2021, the IRS let you set aside \$270 dollars pre-tax each month for transit expenses. Assuming a tax rate of 30%, the average commuter saves \$81 dollars per month in taxes.

You can do it all, quickly and easily, from your online commuter dashboard. Here you can place orders for commuter products, view any credit amounts, load funds onto a transit card, manage all transactions, access notifications from your transit providers or ConnectYourCare, and set up recurring orders.

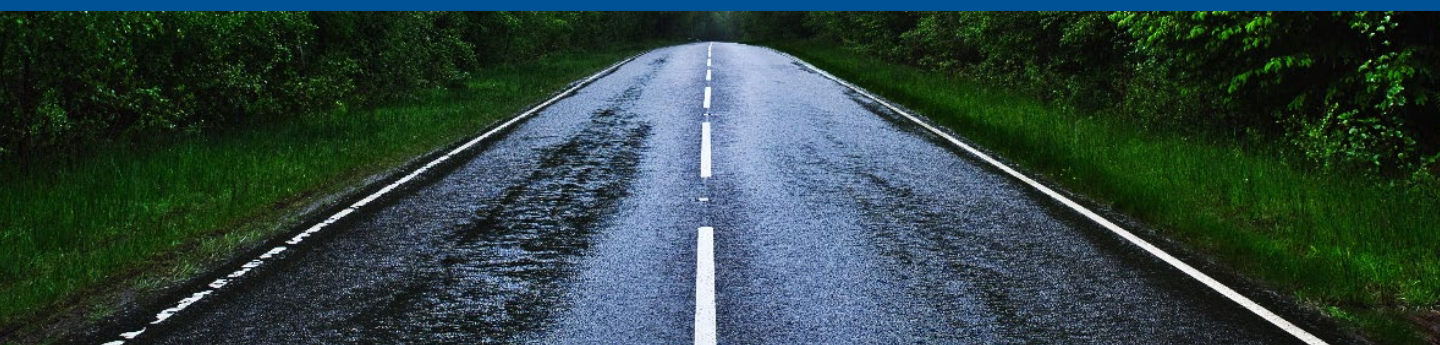
As always, if you have any questions, ConnectYourCare representatives are available 24/7, 365 days a year. [Check out ConnectYourCare.com](https://connectyourcare.com) for commuter benefits information.



What do you want to know more about?

Send us an email with how we can help!

risk.mgmt@cookcountyil.gov



Understanding Key Health Insurance Terms

During October's Open Enrollment over 7,000 employees made changes to their benefit elections. Plan and dependent enrollment changes made during Open Enrollment are effective December 1, 2020. FSA elections are effective January 1, 2021. To help you use your benefits more effectively, here are some key terms you should know.

Contribution	The amount you pay your insurance company for health coverage each month or year.
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Deductible	The amount of money you must pay out-of-pocket before coverage kicks in. Deductibles are usually set at rounded amounts (such as \$350). Typically, the lower the premium, the higher the deductible.
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Coinsurance	The amount of money you owe to a medical provider once the deductible has been paid. Coinsurance is usually a predetermined percentage of the total bill. If the policy's co-insurance is set at 10% and the bill comes to \$100, the policy-holder owes \$10 in co-insurance.
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Co-pay	This type of insurance plan is similar to co-insurance, but with one key exception: rather than waiting until the deductible has been paid out, you must make their copayment at the time of service.
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Out-of-pocket maximum	The amount of money you pay for deductibles and coinsurance charges within a given year before the insurance company starts paying for all covered expenses.
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In-network	This term refers to physicians and medical establishments that deliver patient services covered under the insurance plan. In-network providers are generally the cheapest option for policyholders. Insurance companies typically have negotiated lower rates with in-network providers.
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Out-of-network	This term refers to physicians and medical establishments not covered under your insurance plan. Services from out-of-network providers are usually more expensive than those rendered by in-network providers. This is because out-of-network providers have not negotiated lower rates with your insurer.
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Happy Holidays from Benefits Connect



Have questions?

Visit cookcountyrisk.com or
contact Employee Benefits:
Email: risk.mgmt@cookcountyil.gov

Blue Cross Blue Shield Hotline Numbers:
For HMO plan: 1 (800) 892-2803
For PPO plan: 1 (800) 960-8809

Cook County Department of Risk Management
Employee Benefits Division



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