

**FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT
OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR THE 2006 CALENDAR YEAR
BEGINS NOVEMBER 7, 2005 AND ENDS DECEMBER 1, 2005**



Chairperson
Susan Grimes Munsell

Don't miss this opportunity to take advantage of a unique benefit that permits you to have pre-tax dollars deducted from your paycheck and set aside for one or both of the Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA): Medical Care Spending Accounts and Dependent Care Spending Accounts. You never pay state, city or federal income taxes, FICA or Medicare on the money you contribute to your FSA.

Participation in the Medical Care Spending Account enables you to pay for your family's medical care expenses such as doctor visit co-pays, dental and medically needed orthodontia co-pays, prescription co-pays, health insurance deductibles, vision expenses not covered by insurance, and some over-the-counter drugs. The entire amount that you have elected to be deducted may be used as soon as the plan year begins, even before all the deductions are taken from your pay.



Commissioner
F. Thomas Lewand

Dependent Care Spending Accounts can be used to pay for childcare expenses while you and/or your spouse are at work, looking for work, or are at school; for local day camp; and for care expenses for your incapacitated dependent at any age. To be reimbursed for dependent care expenses, the amount cannot exceed the current balance of your account.

Fringe Benefits Management Company (FBMC) offers you the EZ REIMBURSE® card that you can use like a debit card for many of your reimbursable medical care expenses. It allows you to pay prescription drug co-pays at a participating pharmacy, at your doctor's office, dentist's office, or other health care provider if they accept Mastercard. The provider is paid directly out of your medical care spending account. Anyone who wishes to use the EZ REIMBURSE® card will need to send an order form to FBMC by December 2, even if they had a card during 2005.



Commissioner
Sherry L. McMillan

It is important that you carefully plan your anticipated medical and dependent care costs. Any balance remaining in your account after the deadline for submitting reimbursement claims will be forfeited in accordance with IRS regulations. However, the IRS has instituted a new "grace period" which allows participants until March 15th of the following calendar year to incur eligible expenses. The [2006 Plan Booklet](#) on the [Employee Benefits](#) website has details about this new grace period.



Commissioner
James P. Pitz

Beginning January 1, 2006, you can access your account by entering your employee ID. Your social security number is not necessary. The new website address is <http://www.myfbmc.com/michigan>. All enrollments must be entered in your MI HR Self-Service account at www.michigan.gov/selfserv. If you have any questions, do not have access to the Internet, or need assistance enrolling, please contact the MI HR Service Center at 877-766-6447 (toll free), TDD 517-241-8046, or fax 517-241-5892. The MI HR Service Center is available Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., except holidays.

Please note: Anyone who wishes to participate in 2006 must enroll during the current open enrollment period, even if you are participating this year. Please visit the Department of Civil Service website at www.michigan.gov/mdcs, Employee Benefits, [Flexible Spending](#), for additional information.

Please direct your comments or suggestions to MDCS-CivilServiceNews@michigan.gov or Michigan Department of Civil Service, MI CS News, P.O. Box 30002, 400 South Pine Street, Lansing, Michigan 48909. Archived issues can be viewed on our website at www.michigan.gov/mdcs under Announcements.

**MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL SERVICE RECEIVES
2005 IPMA-HR AGENCY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE**

The Michigan Department of Civil Service was selected to receive the 2005 International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) Agency Award for Excellence for large agencies.

The Department of Civil Service was selected for this award for its implementation and successful operation of the MI HR Service Center. The project consolidated numerous human resources processes and transactions into a centralized service center, resulting in significantly reduced budget expenditures for staffing and standardized services for state government employees. The MI HR Service Center became operational ahead of schedule and under budget. It has now been operational for over a year and averages 8,000 calls and 8,000 transactions per month, while maintaining nearly 97 percent satisfaction and accuracy rates.

The collaborative effort was sponsored by the Executive Office and the Directors of the Department of Management and Budget, Office of the Budget, Office of the State Employer, Department of Information Technology, Department of Civil Service, and involved input from agency HR Directors and their staff. The project was directed by James D. Farrell prior to his appointment as the State Personnel Director.

IPMA-HR established this award to recognize the overall quality, accomplishments, and contributions of an agency human resource program that exceeds the normal operation of a "good government human resource program." IPMA-HR is the leading public sector HR organization serving more than 7,500 members.

State Personnel Director Farrell accepted the award on behalf of the department and all those involved in the project at the International IPMA-HR Training Conference on October 18, 2005.

For more information about IPMA-HR you can go to their website at <http://www.ipma-hr.org>.

MICHIGAN'S 15TH ANNUAL HARVEST GATHERING

The Michigan Harvest Gathering (MHG) is the chief fund and food raising campaign of the Michigan Food Bank Council. The Michigan Department of Agriculture will again spearhead the effort for state employees as it has for the past fourteen years. The state employees' campaign runs from October 24, 2005, until November 7, 2005.

Each year, thousands of state employees participate in the MHG campaign along with thousands of individuals, school children, hospital employees, corporations, foundations, associations, and manufacturers who donate food and cash yearly. Last year, state employees donated over 90,000 pounds of food and over \$34,000.

Michigan has six regional food banks that cover specific territories to ensure that all 83 counties are served. Joey Harrington of the Detroit Lions will support this year's harvest gathering as an Honorary Chair to help raise funds, food, and awareness of hunger throughout the State of Michigan. Some areas of the state are indicating a 25 percent increase in people who are seeking help with food this year.

Facts About Michigan's Harvest Gathering:

1. The 2005 goal is to raise \$350,000 and collect 500,000 pounds of food.
2. Since 1991, MHG has raised over \$4.3 million and collected 6.6 million pounds of food for hungry people throughout Michigan.
3. About 1 million people will use a food bank this year.
4. Michigan food banks will distribute over 75 million pounds of food this year valued at over \$10 million.
5. Last year, donations made it possible for food banks to distribute over 11 million pounds of food around Michigan for under 2 cents per pound, and procure over 450,000 pounds at a cost of 21 cents per pound.

All the food collected by state employees is distributed to food banks in local areas. One hundred percent of the money collected in the state employees' drive goes to transport food or to buy highly desirable food items such as tuna fish and canned fruit. About 50 percent of the food goes to either the very young or the elderly. Monetary contributions are tax deductible.

Every department has a Harvest Gathering coordinator to assist you in creating fun ways to make this event a success. For example, some departments are having chili cook-offs, can sculpture contests, raffles, and bake sales, among the activities in the two-week drive for food and funds.

For further information, contact Saralee Howard, Coordinator, Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) at 517-241-2669 or howards9@michigan.gov or visit the website at <http://www.michigan.gov/mda>.

BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEW VIDEO NOW ONLINE

As promised in the May 2005 edition of the Michigan Civil Service News, the Behavior Based Interview video is now online. More and more employers are using the Behavior Based Interview method to find the ideal employee, and employees are using this same method to sufficiently prepare themselves for an interview.

The behavior based method of interviewing is predicated on the idea that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. For example, in a traditional interview, the applicant describes how they would likely handle a given situation. However, in the behavior based interview, the applicant is asked to describe in detail an actual situation they encountered in the past, how they handled it, and the outcome of the task.

The video contains a mock interview to demonstrate the behavior based interview process and uses the STAR method.

S - Situation

T - Task

A - Action

R - Result

An interviewee must be prepared to focus on a situation they have experienced, the task they performed, what action they took in that situation, and the result of the task. For more information on the Behavior Based Interview process, please visit the Michigan Civil Service News Archives, [May issue](#).

We welcome your comments regarding the content and usefulness of the video.

COLD AND FLU TIPS!

The work place is a common area to catch the flu or a cold. Some very simple measures can be taken to minimize your exposure to viruses or passing them on to others.

Plain soap and water is the best method for ridding hands of disease and viruses. Washing your hands with soap and water not only gets rid of the viruses that cause the common cold, but also viruses that cause hepatitis, acute gastroenteritis, and many other illnesses. Physical removal of viruses with soap and water is much more effective because some viruses are hardy and somewhat resistant to disinfectants. Another important fact is that waterless handwipes only remove roughly 50 percent of bacteria.

Hand hygiene agents have been shown to reduce the spread of germs that can cause a number of healthcare infections. Hand washing is an important part of a complete health program that includes a healthy diet, exercise, adequate sleep, and proper immunization. A number of hand hygiene agents are now available with different active ingredients and application methods. Anti-microbial hand washing agents are substantially more effective in reducing bacteria than the alcohol-based handrubs and waterless handwipes.

Hands should be washed frequently and for at least 15 seconds. To help estimate 15 seconds, the suggestion given to children is to sing the kindergarten jingle "Now I Know My ABCs" during hand washing.

If you fit into one of the categories below, it is recommended that you receive a flu shot. (Please check with your doctor before participating in any medical treatment.)

- Adults 50 years or older.
- Children aged 6-23 months.
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as heart or lung disease, transplant recipients, or persons with AIDS).
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season.
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities.
- Children aged 2-18 years on chronic aspirin therapy.
- Health-care workers involved in direct patient care.
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of persons in the above-listed high-risk groups.

More tips for getting through the cold and flu season:

- Avoid touching your face after public contact.
- Don't stop sneezes and coughs with your hands. Use a tissue, then throw it away.
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water, to keep hydrated and flush out toxins.
- Get aerobic exercise: it enhances the immune system.
- Eat highly-colored fruits and vegetables: they're full of disease-fighting phytochemicals.
- Eat yogurt: its beneficial bacteria boosts the immune system.
- Don't smoke: it hampers the immune system, dries out the nasal passages, and paralyzes the cilia that clean the respiratory system.
- Relax and do things you enjoy.
- Get fresh air. Indoor air can be dry and stale.
- Keep alcohol consumption to a minimum: it dehydrates you and hampers your liver, which is your primary filtering system.
- If you feel ill with a cough, runny nose, fever, headache, and/or achy joints: STAY HOME until you're non-contagious!

DEPENDENT AUDIT UPDATE

The statewide audit of employees who carry dependents on one or more of the State's group insurance plans is approximately half complete. Employees of the Departments of Agriculture; History, Arts and Libraries; Military and Veterans Affairs; Natural Resources; State Police; Transportation; and Treasury were mailed audit packages on October 20, 2005. These employees must return proof of their dependents' eligibility for benefits by November 21, 2005.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) will be the largest and final departmental audit. The DOC audit will commence in late November 2005.

Once again, we urge you to provide proof of your dependents' eligibility for benefits if you have been requested to do so. Failure to provide documents to substantiate your dependents' eligibility could result in serious consequences. Actions that may be taken include, but are not limited to, the removal of dependents from benefit coverage, recovery of premiums and claims paid for ineligible dependents and, where appropriate, other corrective action. If your dependents are removed due to a lack of response, your next opportunity to enroll eligible dependents during open enrollment will not occur until August 2006, and you will again be required to substantiate the eligibility of any dependents seeking coverage through the various State of Michigan benefit plan offerings.

Information regarding dependent eligibility can be obtained by accessing the Dependent Benefit Audit web page at www.michigan.gov/mdcs under the "Announcements" section. You may also direct any questions you might have to the MI HR Service Center at (877) 766-6447 or TDD (517) 241-8046.