

# Employer Update

Spring 2004

## Access to our national network now available to *all* DDPM clients

All Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota members with network coverage may now see any Delta Dental provider across the country and receive in-network benefits. That's especially great news if you have employees who work or live out of state. It's also a benefit to all DDPM members who require dental care while traveling outside of Minnesota.

This change gives our members even greater access

to network savings. Taking advantage of these savings is easy because of the size of our network. Did you know that Delta Dental has the nation's largest dental network, with three of every four U.S. dentists participating in our network at more than 141,000 dental locations?

When members choose a network provider, they benefit from:

**Lower out-of-pocket costs.** Network providers are

reimbursed at a set rate and do not bill members for the difference between this rate and their usual fee.

**No paperwork.**

Network dentists bill us, and we pay them directly, eliminating time-consuming paperwork for members.

Members may visit us on the web at [www.deltadentalmn.org](http://www.deltadentalmn.org) and click on the Dentist Search icon to locate a provider.

## Low – or no – rate increases for 2004

For the second year in a row, Delta Dental's group clients are experiencing very modest rate increases or no increases at all. Our small group rate increases range from 0-6%, and our large group rates are also very stable.

Delta Dental's 2004 large group rate increases are based on a 6.5% trend—lower than

the industry average. The trend represents the inflation in reimbursement and utilization we anticipate from 2003-2004. The cost savings members receive from Minnesota's largest dental networks gives us the ability to deliver lower rate increases than our competitors.

We're able to keep rates affordable because:

- We offer the two largest networks in the state. We estimate more than 96% of Twin Cities metropolitan dentists and 80% of dentists statewide participate in our networks. Our relationship with these providers leads to lower claims costs.
- We operate very efficiently, with a lower than average percentage of premium dollars going to operating costs.

At Delta Dental, we're committed to passing those savings on to you!

### Pooled Plan 2004 Rate Increase

DeltaPremier® Program . . . . .	0-4%
<small>(Preventive, Basic, Comprehensive Standard, and Comprehensive Enhanced)</small>	
DeltaPreferred Option® Program . . . . .	0-2%
Millennium Choice . . . . .	4-6%
Voluntary Program	
Discover . . . . .	6%
Dental Flex . . . . .	0%

# Inside

Survey results in . . . customer satisfaction high



Get Oral Health Tips via e-mail

**Healthy Smiles Tip:**  
**A child's first visit to the dentist**  
One American in five does not visit a dentist. But your child's first dental visit will reduce the risk of tooth decay by 50% and help prevent bad habits before they start.

**WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?**  
By age 3, a child's teeth are fully developed. At this time, a dentist can check for cavities and provide fluoride treatments. A dentist can also teach parents and children proper brushing and flossing techniques. Early visits help children become comfortable with the dental office and the dentist. This can help prevent dental anxiety and fear.

**TO SCHEDULE YOUR CHILD'S FIRST VISIT:**  
Call your dentist or Delta Dental for more information. We'll help you find a dentist who is convenient for you and your child.

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Mailers directed at small business

Give your employees a great dental plan. And tell them it cost you a bundle. (It'll be our secret.)

# Delta Dental networks continue as Minnesota's largest

Thanks to our active approach to network management, Delta Dental continues to maintain Minnesota's most extensive dental network with more than 80% of the state's licensed, practicing dentists participating.

"We have developed a comprehensive dental network management strategy," said Nancy McMorran, senior vice president, Professional Services. "We monitor our networks on an ongoing basis and take a proactive approach to ensure that our customers' needs are met."

In 2003, our Professional Services staff conducted more than 1,100 onsite dental clinic visits. The department also hosted workshops for dental office administrators and launched numerous recruitment, retention and quality improvement initiatives.

"The onsite clinic visits are an especially important part of our ongoing efforts to maintain top notch dental networks in Minnesota," said McMorran. "Delta Dental's network representatives are assigned geographic areas, allowing them to develop strong one-on-one relationships with area dentists,

which in turn benefits our customers."

Overall, Delta Dental offers plan participants a choice of more than 3,800 Minnesota dentist office locations that accept Delta Dental coverage. Nationwide, three out of four dentists — or more than 141,000 dental office locations — participate in the DeltaUSA® network, the largest dental network in the United States.

## Ongoing dentist shortage

A key issue facing the dental industry is that while the demand for dental coverage has grown, the supply of dentists in Minnesota and throughout the country has remained static or in certain geographic areas — such as areas of rural Minnesota — has declined.

According to a January 2003 article in the St. Cloud Times, the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry estimates that over the next 10 years, Minnesota will be losing 22-30% of its dentists to retirement. At the same time, the number of students enrolled in the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry has dropped to 92 students, down from an average of 150 in the 1970s. Certain rural areas have also been affected, as graduates opt to settle in major metropolitan areas due to better job opportunities for spouses.

Simultaneously, demand for dental coverage has increased. The National Association of Dental Plans estimates that about 61% of the U.S. population has dental benefits. This number

is expected to grow to 65% by 2005. This signifies a rapid increase in popularity of dental benefits compared to 1970, when approximately 6% of the population had dental coverage.

According to McMorran, "While the dentist shortage has not had a major effect on our networks, we've minimized potential disruptions to our customers by taking a very aggressive approach to maintaining our network strength through ongoing recruitment and retention activities, especially in certain parts of rural Minnesota."

In 2004 Delta Dental will continue to address network issues with more than 500 onsite visits planned to participating dentists, workshops for office administrators in three Minnesota locations, and participation in the Minnesota dental convention, among other initiatives.

In addition, new monthly reporting systems are slated for implementation in 2004 to track dentists' participation by county, city, zip code and specialty which will provide up-to-date information for recruiters to identify and act on potential access concerns resulting from participating dentists' deaths, retirements, moves out-of-state, and voluntary and involuntary terminations.

Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota will continue to make every effort to provide convenient access to all its members.



## Ask Valerie

*Valerie Sorenson is Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Delta Dental® Plan of Minnesota. If you have questions you would like us to address in Broker Update, please send them to Editor, Marketing Support, Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota, 3560 Delta Dental Drive, Eagan, MN 55122-3166.*

### Question:

**What percentage of Delta Dental clients renew their contract with us each year?**

### Answer:

At Delta Dental we are very proud of our high client retention. For example, for January 2004, our busiest renewal month, we retained 94.6% of our pooled group membership, 96% of our risk groups, and 97% of our ASO large groups. We attribute this success to our competitive prices and unbeatable service.

To learn more about our competitive rates, see the article on page 1. An article about our service is on page 3.

### Question:

**What is the most common annual plan maximum?**

### Answer:

Approximately 90% of groups continue to have a \$1,000 annual plan maximum. Some choose a richer plan as a way to help attract and retain talented employees in a competitive marketplace.

# Excellent service all the way

It's not enough to get your business. We want to keep it. That's why we're so committed to providing excellent customer service from enrollment through claims.

When you call, we'll answer in just 13 seconds on average. Submit your claim, and we'll typically pay it in just 5 days.

Our 2003 annual customer satisfaction survey shows that our efforts are paying off:

- ★ 94% of claimants rate our claims turnaround time positively.
- ★ 91% of claimants say that they're pleased with our service.
- ★ 91% of callers give our customer service representatives a positive rating, citing the courteous, helpful service received.
- ★ 97% rated the service received from their dental office as good or better.

Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota places such a high priority on customer satisfaction that we survey our members each month, looking for ways to improve our service and products.

We have special customer service units designed to meet the needs of group administrators, brokers, and members.

## We help you choose the plan that's right for you

Our sales team works closely with brokers and groups, helping them select or—for large groups—specially design a dental plan that best meets the group's needs and budget. We're ready to help with rate and product information, requests for sales proposals, new group implementation, on-site education, post-sale service, and renewal information. At Delta Dental, we're committed to helping groups fully understand their benefits.

Pooled group administrators should call their broker or DeltaConnect at 651-406-5920 or toll free at 800-906-5250 for all their sales needs. Administrators of individually rated groups should call their broker or our Sales Department at 651-406-5900 or toll free at 800-328-1188.

## Enjoy world-class service

Once a group becomes a Delta Dental client, our Employer Services staff takes over. Group administrators have just one number to call—the Employer Services phone line—for questions about eligibility requirements; paper, electronic and online enrollment; benefits; claims; locating participating providers; and billing. Clients may also order enrollment, maintenance, and claim

The image shows a survey form with two main sections: 'Overall Performance' and 'Overall Evaluation'. The 'Overall Performance' section includes questions about the company's overall performance, contributing to profitability, and developing new products. The 'Overall Evaluation' section includes questions about the company's ability to attract and retain talent, and the quality of its products and services. The form uses a Likert scale for responses, ranging from 'Not at all' to 'Very much'.

forms through Employer Services. Call Employer Services at 651-994-5300 or toll free at 866-318-9449.

## For our members

We also have a customer service unit dedicated to answering members' questions about enrollment, benefits, claims, billing and more. Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota members may call 651-406-5916 or toll free at 800-553-9536. DeltaUSA members may call 651-406-5901 or toll free at 800-448-3815.

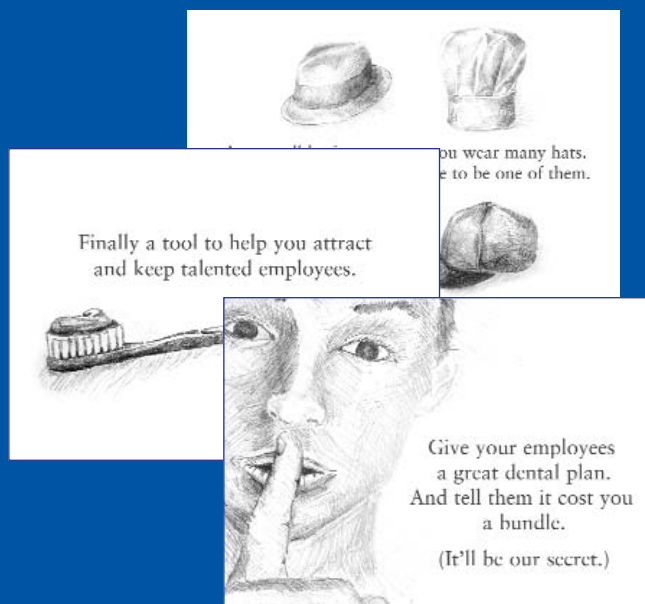
We are always interested in your feedback about our products and service.

## Direct mail campaign directed at small businesses

Why should employers offer their employees a Delta Dental plan? Because our dental plans are affordable, hassle-free, and will help them attract and retain talented employees. That's the message 15,000 small businesses throughout Minnesota received thanks to a three-part direct mail campaign we introduced this March.

Small business owners and managers were asked to contact their broker or Delta Dental for more information about our dental plans.

If you know of a small business that might benefit from an affordable employee dental plan, please let your broker or our DeltaConnect team know. You can reach DeltaConnect at 651-406-5920 or 800-906-5250



# Oral Health Tips available via e-mail to Delta Dental groups

Here's a nice perk you might want to take advantage of: Each month, at no charge, we will e-mail you informative, professionally designed oral health tips for your employees.

These tips include valuable information on such topics as proper brushing and flossing, oral cancer, and the role diet plays in oral health. (See a sample Oral Health Tip at right.)

You may use these PDFs in your internal newsletters, print and distribute them with your employees' paychecks, or e-mail them to your staff.

We have received a very positive response to this program from our group administrators and members.

If you do not currently receive these tips, but would like to, send your e-mail address to: [deltacconnect@deltadentalmn.org](mailto:deltacconnect@deltadentalmn.org) and ask to be added to the list. These tips are also available on our web page at [www.deltadentalmn.org](http://www.deltadentalmn.org).



**Employer Update** is published for our group clients. Article ideas and questions from readers are welcome. **Publisher:** Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota. **Send questions or comments to:** Cathy Schmidtke, Editor, Marketing Communications, Delta Dental Plan of Minnesota, 3560 Delta Dental Drive, Eagan, MN 55122, E-mail: [cschmidtke@deltadentalmn.org](mailto:cschmidtke@deltadentalmn.org).

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