

APRIL 2014

BENEFITS TOOLBOX



A publication of
the New York City
District Council
Of Carpenters
Benefit Funds

NYCDCC WELFARE FUND PLAN NOW PROVIDES FOR FREE PREVENTIVE CARE SERVICES

In accordance with the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the NYCDCC Welfare Fund Plan now covers certain **in-network** "Preventive Care" services at no cost to you. This applies even if you haven't met your deductible, or if you usually have co-pays for other services. To clarify how this affects you, it's important to understand what "Preventive Care" means.

The term "Preventive Care" means to take certain measures to prevent illness or disease rather than wait to treat them after they have already invaded your body. "Preventive Care" services can help you avoid becoming sick while also improving your overall health. Screenings, checkups, physicals, shots, vaccinations, and even certain types of counseling, are just some of the services that fall under the "Preventive Care" umbrella. Now, because of the ACA, you and your dependents are able to get these important services at no cost to you.

Specifically, under the NYCDCC Welfare Fund, while using Empire BlueCross BlueShield, you will no longer have to pay any costs or file a claim for "Preventive Care" services as long as you get these services from an **in-network** doctor.



Here's how it works

If you use a doctor who is **in-network**, you get free access to "Preventive Care" services (**as defined by the ACA**) such as:

- Many cancer screenings, including mammograms and colonoscopies
- Preventive Care physical exams, which are covered for all ages
- Routine vaccinations against diseases like measles, polio or meningitis
- Counseling, screenings, and vaccines for healthy pregnancies
- Flu and pneumonia shots

These examples listed are just some of the "Preventive Care" services that you can access at no cost to you. To view a full list of these services, you can visit **www.empireblue.com**. If you don't have access to a computer or the internet, you can get more information about these services by calling (800) 553-9603.

***Remember, these services are only fully covered if you go to an in-network provider. If you visit an out-of-network provider, you may have to pay part or all of the costs, so exercise due diligence when scheduling your appointments.**

Message from the Executive Director



Welcome to the second issue of **Benefits Toolbox**.

This quarter's **Toolbox** begins with an important reminder about the availability of in-network preventive care with no co-payment. This improvement to the plan of benefits was enacted by the Board of Trustees, in accordance with the Affordable Care Act. Taking advantage of preventive care now, especially without a financial cost to plan participants, allows us to hopefully remain healthy for long periods of time, or at the very least, identify potential health issues earlier so that we can obtain necessary treatments. Please make sure to plan for and take the appropriate action regarding preventive care.

Along with our own health wellness, we also need to spend time attending to our financial wellness. The "Checking in with Prudential" article provides important information about strategies for rebalancing your annuity assets. Putting all your annuity allocations into the "default" plan is a strategy, but is it the best one for you long term? This article may help you answer that question, or at least start you on the path toward a larger financial planning discussion. Additional information from Prudential can be found on the Funds' website, in the **Annuity** section.

Speaking of the revamped website, statistics are showing that more and more members are taking advantage of the available materials, as well as access to individual information through a secure portal. One of the new sections of the website is the **Video Library**, which contains numerous videos explaining common benefit terminology. In some cases, the videos are even available in both English and Spanish. Check out the article in this issue of the **Toolbox** about the **Video Library**, and then go check out the videos on the website to become a better informed plan participant.

Also in this issue is an article on substance abuse. Unfortunately, in today's society, we have all been affected, directly or indirectly, by addiction issues. One of the most important things for the addict, and the addict's family to know is that you are not alone. The Welfare Fund has programs available to help, and this article provides information on the assistance available.

This Spring 2014 issue also contains information on how to save money on prescription drugs, using the GVS Vision Pass, and the new NYCDCC Benefit Funds Facebook page. We've recently surpassed 100 likes on Facebook and continue to grow. Join us in the effort to help better communicate and educate ourselves about the benefits available through the NYCDCC Benefit Funds.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I am pleased to report that the Welfare Fund Subcommittee has been meeting on a regular basis, and is discussing, based on the current financial position of the Fund and future expected expenses, the possibility of reinstating benefits lost in 2012, while also examining the overall fundamental design of the plan, to ensure its long term stability and viability. While there are no guarantees, if and when the Subcommittee has something official to report, we will get the message out to the participants through the website, Facebook, **Benefits Toolbox**, special announcement, or other available communication vehicles.

In the meantime, enjoy the end (hopefully) of the frigid Winter, as we welcome the warmth of Spring!

Sincerely,

Ryk Tierney

Executive Director
NYCDCC Benefit Funds

The New and Improved NYCDCC Benefit Funds Website has Launched!

- New Design
- Benefits Video Library
- Benefits Information and FAQs
- Benefits Toolbox Newsletter
- Electronic SPDs and SMMs
- Breaking News
- Improved Member Portal & User Guide
- And Much More!

Stay informed about your benefits...

Check us out at www.nyccbf.org!



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Checking In With Prudential: Strategies For Rebalancing Your Annuity Fund



Diversifying your mix of investments is an important step toward making your Annuity Fund work effectively for you, but proper planning doesn't necessarily end there. Even the smartest choices need to be evaluated every now and then.

What is rebalancing?

Rebalancing is an investment discipline where individuals adjust their account to bring it back in line with their original intentions.

For instance, let's assume "John" invests 60% in ABC Mutual Fund and 40% in XYZ Mutual Fund. During the first 12 months, ABC Mutual Fund does very well. So well, in fact, that it now makes up 75% of "John's" portfolio. When "John" sees this, he adjusts his account to bring it back to his original 60/40 target. That's rebalancing.

Why rebalance?

Even though the mix of investments in your account can change for a variety of reasons—fluctuations in the market and fund performance are two of the more common—if one asset class consistently outperforms the others, your asset allocation will drift away from your desired mix, which could hinder long-term returns.

We've all heard the saying, "buy low, sell high." Rebalancing is one way to do just that since it forces you to cut back on winners and increase allocations to undervalued investment categories.

When to rebalance?

Periodic rebalancing is the most common approach. Simply review the allocation of your assets regularly, on a specified schedule—quarterly, semi-annually or annually, for example.

Another method is to rebalance when an asset class exceeds your desired allocation by a certain percentage. 15% is a commonly used limit. For example, if you are comfortable with a 60/40 split (60% stock, 40% fixed income

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Revamped Website Provides Benefits Education through Video Library



As a major part of the recent revamping of our website, the Benefit Funds worked to build a video library meant to help you understand some of the most important terms that are used when discussing your benefits.

The Benefit Funds took on this task because we truly believe that you should not only know how to use your benefits effectively, but you should also have a working knowledge of the terms, rules, and regulations that dictate how your benefits are administered. An unmatched level of member education and communication is one goal that is consistently emphasized at the

Benefit Funds. Our new and informative video library, located on our website, is just a small piece of our effort to reach this goal.

The Benefit Funds video library, which you can find in the “News & Media” section of our website, features easy-to-understand explanations of some of the most common phrases



Medicare vs Medicaid

Out of Pocket Maximum

HIPAA

you hear when you're involved in the process of using your benefits. After all, studies show that over 70% of Americans do not even understand common benefit terms. So, if you're not quite sure what a "deductible" is, or what purpose that recent "Explanation of Benefits" (EOB) you just received in the mail serves, you can now visit our video library to get the answers yourself. **Useful and simple!**

We know how important it is for you to understand your benefits, and because of this, we

are doing everything we can to provide you the education that you need to accomplish this. The Benefit Funds encourages you to check out our new video library by visiting **www.nyccbf.org** and clicking on the "Video Library" tab, which you can find in the "News & Media" section of the website. We will also be sure to monitor the usage of our videos and rotate in new topics to give you as wide a range of valuable information as possible.



The New York City District Council of Carpenters Benefit Funds is now on Facebook!

Come Check us out and Like our Page at www.facebook.com/NYCDCCBF



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Express Scripts Introduces Mobile App to Help Members Manage Prescriptions

Great news NYCDCC members! Express Scripts has introduced a mobile app that allows you to manage your prescription drug benefit with your smartphone. If you choose to download the app on your phone, you will be able to view your orders, check drug interactions, and even find the closest retail pharmacy to you in just seconds, among many other useful options. This will afford you the convenience of easily keeping track of your medications, keeping on your schedule, and as a result, just feeling good about yourself.

To download this helpful free app for your mobile phone, you can search for “Express Scripts” in your phone’s app store, or you can scan the QR code below.



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Helpful Tips for Saving on Prescription Drug Costs

As the cost of living continues to rise in New York City and its surrounding areas, finding ways to save money has become a necessity. One way the Benefit Funds believes members can save money is by cutting your prescription drug costs. To help you with this cost cutting endeavor, which is not only beneficial to you but to the Fund as well, we have put together some tips to guide you:

- **Generics** - Ask your doctor if he/she can prescribe a generic drug instead of a brand name drug. Generic drugs typically cost less than brand name drugs even though they are therapeutically equivalent and equally effective.
- **Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drugs** - An OTC drug may be an option. OTC drugs don’t require a prescription and can save you a trip to the doctor. OTC drugs can be found in pharmacies, grocery stores, and many other retail and online outlets. Plus, an OTC drug may cost less than a prescription drug co-pay.
- **Lifestyle Changes** - For some health conditions, changes in activity levels, eating habits, or other daily activities can reduce, control, or eliminate the symptoms of a health condition. You can ask your doctor if there are ways they can take an active part in your health choices.
- **Express Scripts Home Delivery** - Express Scripts offers home delivery for certain prescription drugs. By using the home delivery option, you can typically save on maintenance drugs that are taken over a long period of time for conditions such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.

For more information about your prescription drug benefit through Express Scripts, you can visit www.express-scripts.com or call (800) 939-2091.

Important Message for Members with Diabetes

Beginning April 1, 2014, the test strips you have previously used will no longer be covered under your Express Scripts drug list. Affected members should have already received notification from Express Scripts concerning this issue via mail. If this is not yet the case, please take note that the new preferred brand of test strips, "OneTouch," is not compatible with your previous testing system. Fortunately, a new testing system from "OneTouch" is being made available to you at no cost. The Benefit Funds highly recommends that you talk to your doctor about the "OneTouch" system to avoid paying higher costs for your diabetes supplies, specifically, the tests strips that you are required to purchase.

To order a "OneTouch" system at no charge, you can visit www.OneTouch.orderpoints.com and input order code **573EXP333**, or you can call (800) 668-7148 and provide the same order code.

If you have any questions about the "OneTouch" system, you can contact Express Scripts directly by visiting www.express-scripts.com or by calling (800) 939-2091.



General Vision Services (GVS) Vision Pass for NYCDCC Benefit Funds Members and Families

Currently, the NYCDCC Welfare Fund is not offering vision coverage. However, you still have an opportunity to receive discounted vision services through Vision Pass.

Vision Pass is an eyeglass/contact lens plan that offers \$150 - \$250 worth of services for ONLY \$60 or \$70 on an unlimited basis to all NYCDCC members and your families. Using the plan is as easy as calling (800) 884-3332 and identifying yourself as a Vision Pass member. A Vision Pass representative will help you select the most convenient GVS location and will give you a referral number. You and your family can use the Vision Pass as many times as you want for eye exams and eyewear purchases. If you have any questions, please call the GVS hotline at (800) VISION-1. You can also visit their website at www.generalvision.com.



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Overcoming Substance Abuse: How to Get Help

You're not alone!

Too often, individuals who are suffering from addiction (alcohol/drugs), or have a loved one suffering from addiction, suffer in silence. There are feelings of shame, guilt, and hopelessness. It can be a very isolating and lonely feeling. But the NYCDCC Benefit Funds is here to tell you that you're not alone and we're here to help.

We understand that admitting there is a problem and coming forward to ask for help takes a great deal of courage and strength. We also know that this can be an overwhelming and confusing process. Because of this, we'd like to offer our assistance and walk you through the process of getting help.

As cliché as it may sound, the first step is admitting there is a

problem. This sounds like an easy first step, but it's probably one of the most difficult.

Generally speaking, addicts live in a state of denial regarding their alcohol/drug use. It's usually not until they're laid off from work, their significant other has ended their relationship, or they're involved with the law that they begin to see there may be a problem at hand. Being able to admit and

acknowledge that a problem exists is a crucial first step on the road to recovery.

The next step is contacting either the NYCDCC Benefit Funds or Empire BlueCross BlueShield to go over the available benefits, and to ensure your insurance coverage is active. Remember, substance abuse is a covered benefit. However, there are key points that you must keep in mind:

- Inpatient and intensive outpatient treatment requires pre-certification
- You're entitled to an unlimited number of **medically necessary** days, but
 - Empire determines whether or not it is medically necessary
 - Treating clinician can appeal to Empire if denied
- Co-Insurance and Deductible apply for inpatient, intensive outpatient, and outpatient services
 - Co-Insurance=10% for In-Network; 30% for Out-of-Network
 - Deductible=\$400/individual; \$750/family for In-Network; \$750/individual; \$1875/family for Out-of-Network

Once you have verified your coverage and understand how the benefit works, your next step will be to obtain a listing of participating providers. You can obtain this listing



The road to recovery may be a bumpy one, but with support and determination, you can make it through. You may not know it, but there are success stories working right beside you every day!

via Empire's website at www.empireblue.com or by calling Empire directly at **(800) 533-9603**.

You will then want to contact a facility to start the process of being screened for a possible admission. The next steps will vary depending on the course of treatment (inpatient, intensive outpatient, and outpatient). Please keep in mind that there is no universal course of treatment; what works for one, may not work for another. The key is staying focused, finding what works best for you, and sticking with it.

The road to recovery may be a bumpy one, but with support and determination, you can

make it through. You may not know it, but there are success stories working right beside you every day!

If you have any questions regarding the benefits or locating services, please call Empire BlueCross BlueShield at (800) 533-9603 or the NYCDCC Benefit Funds at (212) 366-7300 or (800) 529-3863.

**If you feel your situation is an emergency, please call 911 for immediate assistance.*



NYCDCC Benefit Funds & District Council Launch “Historical Preservation Committee”

Carpentry in New York City has a rich and unique history. Over the past 100 years, the technology and tools used to get the job done have changed, but the dedication and determination of the unionized carpenter has not. To honor this storied history of carpentry in New York City, a group of staff members from the NYCDCC Benefit Funds and the District Council recently volunteered their time and effort to launch a “Historical Preservation Committee.”

The sole purpose of this committee is to preserve the proud history of unionized New York City carpenters by carefully collecting tools and photographs from the last 100 years and displaying them for all to see. We want you to have your own little museum right in our building!

To help in this endeavor, the committee has accepted donations from many sources and has been able to obtain a number of old tools and photographs. However, the committee is still looking for more items and could use your help.

If you have old tools and/or photographs that you would be willing to donate **(we are not asking for nor will we accept cash donations)**, please contact the “Historical Preservation Committee” via email at CarpenterHistoryNYC@nyccbf.org or by writing them at 395 Hudson Street, 9th Floor, New York, NY 10014, Attn: Historical Preservation Committee. After the committee receives your information, they will make arrangements to contact you.

Once the committee has set up the tools and photographs for display, we’ll be sure to let you know so that you can come in and check it out!

or stable value), a rebalancing trigger would be reached if your stock allocation reached 75%.

How to rebalance?

Access your Annuity Fund account by going to www.nyccbf.org, clicking on the "Annuity" tab located under the "Member" section, and then clicking on the Prudential symbol found on the right side of the page. This will bring you to the Annuity Fund website. Here you will have access to your personal account, as well as helpful retirement planning tools

and resources. Click the "Access Your Account" link to log in. ***Please note that your log in information for Prudential is different from what you use for the NYCDCC Benefit Funds website.**

After you enter your username and password, click on the Plan name to go to the Account Details page. On the left hand side of the page, click the "Transfers" link to reallocate your current holdings.

For questions or more information about the New York City District Council of

Carpenters Annuity Fund, please call Prudential Retirement at **1-877-PRU-2100** (1-877-778-2100). Representatives are available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET.

***Keep in mind that an asset allocation strategy does not ensure safety of principal. *It is always possible to lose money while investing in securities, even if you have done your best to choose an asset allocation model that matches your situation. Also note that the information above was provided by Prudential Financial, Inc.**

Tool Time



Pension Benefit Statement Availability

Every participant who has a vested accrued benefit under the New York City District Council of Carpenters Pension Fund (the "Pension Fund") and who is employed by an employer that contributes to the Pension Fund may request a statement of his/her accrued benefit from the Pension Fund. You may request such a statement once in any 12-month period. The benefit statement is an estimate of the monthly benefits you have earned as of the date of your request, based on the most recent information available to the Pension Fund. To request such a benefit statement, please submit a written request to the Fund Office.

Additionally, you can also obtain information concerning your pension benefit by visiting the NYCDCC Benefit Funds website at www.nyccbf.org, logging into the member portal located on the top right corner of the screen, and selecting

the "View Pension Estimate" option. If you are checking this information via the website, the amount of times you can view your pension estimate is unlimited.

Please remember to keep the NYCDCC Benefit Funds updated on any changes in your contact information or marital status by contacting our Member Services Call Center at (800) 529-FUND (3863) or (212) 366-7373.

Compliance & Ethics Program

Report Misconduct, Fraud, Waste, or Abuse

The New York City District Council of Carpenters Benefit Funds strives to maintain the highest standards of ethics and conduct in all aspects of our operations. Because of this, the Board of Trustees has adopted and implemented a Compliance and Ethics Program (CEP). The CEP explains the Benefit Funds' policies for how we conduct our business and sets forth standards for everybody who works at the Funds.

Reporting

If you are unsure of whether an action is permitted by applicable law or the Benefit Funds' policies, you should contact the Chief Compliance Officer. All of us are

Notes and Reminders

responsible for preventing violations of law and for speaking up if we are aware of or have concerns about inappropriate conduct.

All Benefit Funds members or employees can report any matter that may constitute a breach of applicable laws, rules, regulations or Benefit Funds' policies to Julie Block, the Benefit Funds Chief Compliance Officer. Reporters can provide their name or remain anonymous. All information will be considered confidential. The Chief Compliance Officer can be contacted via:

Mail:

**Julie Block, Chief Compliance Officer
New York City District Council of
Carpenters Benefit Funds**
395 Hudson Street, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10014
Work Phone: (212) 366-7533

Confidential Hotline:

(646) 484-1665

Email:

jblock@nyccbf.org
Julie@muellerblock.com
complianceandethics@nyccbf.org

Website:

Visit www.nyccbf.org and click on the "Report a Compliance Issue" link located at the bottom of the screen.



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Member Services Call Center: (800) 529-FUND (3863) or (212) 366-7373

www.nyccbf.org
www.facebook.com/NYCDCCBF

*The information in this newsletter is intended to highlight certain information about your benefits and to provide other information about the Benefit Funds. *Benefits Toolbox* is not a substitute for the official Plan documents which set forth all of the requirements and conditions for benefits. In the event of any inconsistency between *Benefits Toolbox* and the Plan documents, the Plan documents control.