



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Health Insurance Agents Help Consumers and Employers
Secure Affordable Health Insurance



National Association of Health Underwriters
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Personal Testimonials on Why Brokers Make a Difference

For more than 85 years, professionally licensed health insurance agents, brokers and consultants have provided valuable healthcare financing services to individuals and employers. Professional agents have extensive knowledge about health insurance plan design, benefits, and pricing. Many small employers can't afford to have this level of expertise in-house, nor do they have the time to administer a comprehensive, compliant benefits package for their employees.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has reported that agents and brokers often “handle the responsibilities that larger firms generally delegate to their human resources departments — such as finding plans and negotiating premiums, providing information about the selected plans, and processing enrollees.”

With HIPAA, COBRA, ERISA, and federal and state tax requirements to contend with, not to mention all of the new requirements stemming from ACA, professional agents spend a great deal of time helping their clients understand the regulations, complex products and compliance issues.

Health insurance customers who use agents report being satisfied not just with their insurance, but also with the work performed by their agents – especially when it comes to the agent's role in finding the right policy.

A recent Kaiser survey found that brokers and agents have a 92 percent approval rating when helping healthcare consumers in the new marketplace.

Professional agents work extremely hard and need to be very knowledgeable in order to stay abreast of the rapid changes in the healthcare system. It would be very costly for a governmental agency in some far off location to match the service and value agents bring to their clients, and it would not be able to replace the personal relationships agents develop with their clients.

Ongoing Support from an Agent

Individuals and business owners typically don't pay any more for employee benefits purchased through an agent or broker than if they purchased the coverage directly from an insurance company. Insurance carriers set aside a small portion of the premium to pay brokers a commission, which covers not only the selling of the plan but also much of the servicing required. In today's declining commission environment, agents spend more time than ever before servicing their clients – a testament to their commitment and dedication.

Agent Associations

NAHU is the only national association working solely on behalf of health insurance agents and benefit professionals. NAHU requires each of its members to always make healthcare coverage recommendations with the customers' best interest in mind.

For more testimonials on NAHU members helping individuals and employers find appropriate health insurance, please go to www.brokersmakingadifference.org.

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"The premium for the group insurance plan I was on recently doubled and the benefits were cut, so I began to shop for an individual insurance plan. I asked my doctor for suggestions, and she gave me the contact information for my broker. I called him, and told him the benefits that were important to me, a little background about my health history, the max I could afford for a monthly premium and the deductible amount I felt comfortable with. From this, he helped me narrow my options down to a few plans. He listened, was knowledgeable about the different plans and gave me options and suggestions. After I hung up the phone, I felt very confident about my decision."

- Teresa Nicola (Client)

"I am an independent insurance broker and have specialized in health insurance products for 23 years. I employ three other individuals, two of whom are also licensed. We don't sell insurance over the Internet. We sit down face-to-face with each of our clients, explain their choices to them and let them select what works best for them. These appointments can sometimes take an hour and a half or more.

We also do a lot of business in the Medicare market. The meetings with senior citizens can sometimes take twice as long, particularly when trying to explain their options for a Part D prescription drug plan. We run their list of drugs through the various formularies so we can determine which plan will be the most cost-effective for them. For this (the prescription drug component), we make \$6.00 per month. That's right—\$6.00! I can't think of one government agency that would offer that type of service

for such a small amount of money. We even make house calls for our elderly clients who can't make it to the office.

We handle all of the claims after the sale as well, troubleshoot on behalf of our clients if any billing errors are made, and assist our clients in the appeals process if that becomes necessary. Our clients truly appreciate the service and are constantly sending us thank you notes, bringing us cookies and other goodies and most importantly, referring their friends and relatives to us because they know we will give them the same excellent service regardless of how much or how little money we will make on the product we are selling."

- Rebecca Swanson
(Broker)

"I feel compelled to write and offer up a deep and heartfelt thanks to the Laughlin Agency (Stuart Ouellette, in particular) for the absolutely incredible assistance I was given while trying to secure health insurance coverage for my 3-year-old son. Mr. Ouellette's kindness, professionalism, vast base of knowledge, compassion and

generosity with his time (even going so far as to return one of my calls while he was out-of-town on vacation) made navigating through the labyrinthine health insurance application process as manageable and pleasant as finding a new insurance policy could ever be! Honestly, I can't put into words what it meant to me to have an ally of that caliber on my side while I was facing the very scary prospect of my son being without the medical coverage he needs. Thank you, Mr. Ouellette, from the bottom of my heart."

- J. Hussa (Client)

"Licensed health insurance producers (agents and brokers) provide a wide range of services for both individual consumers and the business community.

Producers interface with insurers, acquire quotes, analyze plan options, and consult clients through the purchase of health insurance... It is essential that [policymakers] recognize and protect the indispensable role that licensed insurance professionals play in serving consumers."

-The National Association of Insurance Commissioners



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"I want to share that our experience with my broker and his staff was wonderful! They are good people to work with and very, very helpful! They helped my son get medical coverage. If he had gone through the CoverOregon website, my son would have easily given up because of the problems. Going through my broker and his staff was so easy. Thank you, thank you so very much for all of your help! My son and I are truly very grateful for your advisory!"

- Mary Moore (Client)

"I obtain many customers who have applied for coverage online or directly from the insurance carrier and are declined. I have a meeting with them in which we go over their application and what was reviewed by underwriting. I request the client to bring in their doctor's notes for each item they checked "YES" out of the 50 medical questions. I helped one individual who was previously declined in May of 2008 and she was able to obtain coverage in December of the same year. She answered "YES" to 5 of the 50 medical questions. I called her application the "book" because the total pages submitted were 30 pages!

I helped another individual who was declined and then later received a waiver for a pre-existing condition for two years and the client was "more than willing" to accept the waiver and obtain coverage. It is hard for me to accept defeat and I urge my clients to "fight this decline." I help them get out of the Oregon Medical Insurance Pool and on to a better plan.

My clients love me and the above scenarios are just some of the ways that I provide excellent customer service. Can Oregon Health Authority or the federal government provide this? I doubt it."

- Donna R. Green (Broker)

"I have been in the group health insurance business for more than 23 years. While the annual renewal process, carrier selection, funding arrangement, etc. are important for clients, it represents a fraction of the time I spend with my clients.



The most recent issue I have spent time resolving with my clients is with the new ARRA/COBRA law. My employer clients have been calling us left and right to explain the regulation. While we are not lawyers, we can provide them with documented resources from the IRS. Many answers are on the IRS website but it is impossible for the average person to navigate the thousands of subjects and pieces of information. One particular client who has part-time personnel is trying to run his business but needs constant help with insurance procedures and government regulations. Another client has an employee whose dependent has an illness that the hospital and third party payer cannot seem to get straight because of a coding error. No one will call her back and all she gets is the collection agency demanding payment. The employer does not want to get involved because of the person's health information and the HIPAA regulations. We are the middle person that speaks both languages."

- Rebecca Swanson (Broker)

