

# INNOVATIVE COST-SAVING STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL BENEFIT PLANS

**BEC KURZYNSKE, M3 INSURANCE**

Under normal circumstances, educational systems face budgetary restrictions. COVID-19 has required schools to stretch their dollars even further in order to maintain a high level of student achievement while adapting to remote learning as well as social distancing and sanitation guidance.

Wisconsin budgets for the upcoming school year were already in place in July, and unexpected expenses likely have schools looking for opportunities to cut costs in other areas of their financial plan – even employee benefits. The good news is that cost savings does not have to result in lower quality benefit packages. Our decades of experience working with schools have shown us that, if you're willing to get a bit creative, you can lower plan costs without losing the industry-leading total rewards package that drives talent attraction and retention for your school.

## **Innovative Employee Benefits Cost-Saving Strategies for Schools**

### **Group purchasing**

Joining up with other educational systems to purchase insurance builds your buying power, giving you access to better benefits at a lower cost. We've worked with cooperatives and consortiums made up of schools (usually in a specific geographic region) to create low cost, high quality benefit packages with great success.

### **Captives**

Like a cooperative or a consortium, joining a captive can be a great solution for building greater buying power and purchasing insurance in a group. However, this cost savings idea comes with another benefit: greater access to your data. Homogenous captives like the [M3 EduCaptive](#) allow you to join together with other schools, share similar risk, and proactively implement strategies that can lower your employees' health care costs like wellness programs and biometric screening.

### **Voluntary and worksite benefits**

Every staff member is different, with unique needs and desires in their benefits. Offering voluntary benefits allows for personal decision making about what coverages fit an individual's needs best, from policies like accident and long term disability to innovative options like pet insurance or student loan repayment. Voluntary benefits come at no cost to your school, yet allow you to maintain an industry-leading benefits package and tap into resources like virtual communication and enrollment assistance.

### **Competitive insurance options**

Legacy state and local insurance plans may have been the best option when they were first created, but are you sure they are the right choice for your school today? Speaking with insurance brokers to determine what other opportunities are in the market for your organization could result in cost savings and greater flexibility to design employee benefits tailored to your team.

### **HRA and HSA strategies**

HRAs and HSAs allow your school district to effectively manage risk and take on less financial burden when it comes to employee benefit plans, while still offering a high-quality benefit package. Staff members can securely save funds in an account created specifically to offset unexpected appointments, procedures, or medication that may not be covered by their employer-sponsored benefit plan.

### **Intentional strategy for health insurance, wellness programming and workers' compensation insurance**

Employee health is reflected in health insurance utilization, engagement in wellness programming, and unfortunately, in workplace injuries. Developing a strategy to reduce workplace injuries by focusing on employee health, communication, and education can create significant cost savings for your district in both employee benefits and in workers' compensation premiums.

### **Leveraging health care data**

Use your data to your advantage. Knowing the amount of dollars that your district pays to health care systems can give you the leverage you need to decrease benefit costs and increase the wellbeing of staff and students.

Any of these strategies may be a good fit for your school, but we encourage you to have a conversation with an **M3 Account Executive** to determine which option would have the greatest impact on your budget while maintaining the culture that you've worked so hard to create.