



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Health Insurance Agents Help Consumers and Employers
Secure Affordable Health Insurance



National Association of Health Underwriters
1212 New York Avenue N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005
202-552-5060 | www.brokersmakingadifference.org

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.

BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

"I am writing to tell you that there is a great need for independent insurance agents. I have found your service very beneficial. There are so many insurance plans and companies out there; I would never be able to sort through them all and decide which would be right for me. The agents have experience with the plans, so they can quickly pick out a plan that meets my needs at the price I can afford. The agents make it less stressful. They are great at advising, enrolling and managing my health insurance. There is too much information online for seniors and others to pick the best coverage. I would be lost and confused if I did not have my independent insurance agent, Maureen Culhane. Thank you, Maureen, for making this part of my life choices a lot easier."

- Ryan Laug (Client)

"A man called into healthcare.gov to enroll for his 2014 health insurance coverage in December of 2013. The representative at healthcare.gov that assisted him let him know about the costs of the different Blue Cross plans available. He ended up choosing the partnered bronze plan without getting an explanation about what Partnered entailed. After a couple months, he went to use his card at his Spectrum PCP and was told they did not accept his plan."

- Joe Hughes (Client)

"I do not have the time or knowledge to find and maintain my healthcare needs. It is nice to have an agent that you have trust in to look out for your well-being. I don't believe the government has enough resources to do this on their own."

- Ken Dieterman (Client)

"In June of last year, I was contacted by a prospect who was referred to me. His daughter was in need of a cochlear implant. They had been advised by another agent to enroll in a plan outside of the marketplace. They were told it would cover this procedure. That plan did not. I worked with the family to enroll her in a plan with Blue Cross that would cover the procedure by checking the code's certitude. We also had some tense moments with the marketplace as the website was not working. We almost missed some deadlines because of this. Ultimately, we prevailed. She received the surgery and is able to continue her career as a teacher."

- Joe Ruden (Broker)

"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

"You became our agent when we needed to enroll my husband in Medicare. You came out to our house with information and your vast knowledge of insurance programs, taking the time to explain and recommend what program would be most beneficial for my husband's health situation. A few years later, when I tried to decipher the Affordable Care Program, I did not hesitate to call you. I

relied on your experience again to fill out the application and enroll me in a program during a very stressful time in my life. I have recommended you to several of our relatives and know that those recommendations will lead to others. Thank You, Maureen, for all of your help."

- Vickie Salters (Client)

"We are a medium-size law firm. We do not employ a separate HR person; it is my duty as office manager to oversee the insurance needs of the firm. It would be impossible to do my job without the assistance of our insurance agent. We have relied



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

on the same agent for the past several years and he knows our needs and our goals. He keeps us up to date on legislation so we don't miss deadlines. Without an agent to handle this, we would be forced to hire a person to do all the research, etc. that is necessary. I can't imagine how much more difficult it would make this job without an agent to guide us to the right decisions. Insurance brokers/agents save their clients so much time and money; it does not seem feasible that anyone would think businesses could function without them."

- Pat Fountain (Client)

"As an agent, I begin by explaining terminology and educating clients. Then I move on to risk management and financing the cost of healthcare. I work with employers to determine how much cost they are willing and able to take on, and how to manage the rest. Then, with developed proposals and plan designs, I help to implement and manage their group coverage. Compliance and service are always foremost in the process. The purpose of employee benefits is to help people offset the cost and stress of catastrophic illness and injury."

- Steven Wisneski (Broker)

"The healthcare reform seminar presented by General Agency was top-notch! The turbulent world of health insurance has been a concern for HR managers like me. However, the presentation put on by General Agency calmed my fears and put it in perspective. I am confident that I will be able to work through the reform regulations with the help of the staff at General Agency."

- Megan Quinn (Client)

"Our broker, Shannon, does so much for our company. Without him, we would struggle to choose the correct insurance company for our needs. Even after we choose one, there are many tasks to complete during the entire year. He either does those for us or helps us complete those tasks. Shannon knows our company and what is best for us."

- Stephan Vaughan (Client)



"The employee benefits department at General Agency did a fantastic job explaining to us this extremely convoluted and confusing subject. They answered our questions and did a very good job explaining the intricacies of healthcare reform and how it affects our company. I wish I had a replay button so that I could listen to the presentation again and again as questions arise. I am hoping that this is the first of many educational opportunities that will be available, as this is subject that most of us are not going to absorb and understand for some time to come."

- Rosie Ebb (Client)

"I am constantly calling our agent with questions about our policies. It is much easier to call him when I have multiple questions regarding different policies than having to call the different insurance companies. Being a one-person HR department, I can't imagine not having an agent who helps me not only with my insurance needs, but leads me in the right direction when I have any HR questions. I don't have a single story – I have a history with an agent who informs me and leads me where I need to go."

- Tonia Juncaj (Client)

"I would like to express my appreciation and acknowledge the support you have given me as an agent. I feel very strongly that your professional role



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

is just as important as any other. I value your expertise and knowledge, as well as the opportunity to have a serious and informed discussion regarding my healthcare coverage. By having an open and complete interview, I feel that I can make an intelligent decision based on your support. I do not believe that this is possible via the Internet."

- Donalyn Betterley (Client)

"Our health insurance offerings would be very poor if it were not for Shannon. He has been there every step of the way – searching for the best options, explaining choices, meeting with employees, and helping us save money while improving the plan. Not to mention, the benefit of ALWAYS being available and on call to answer questions, as well as running interference with the insurance companies. We simply could not and would not do it without him!"

- Marlene Tejchma (Client)

"I have had the privilege of working with Lighthouse Insurance and Denise VanPutten for many years. I have found Denise to be knowledgeable and very helpful in providing me with health insurance options here at Community Reformed Church in Zeeland. Not only has she provided me with options, she has been very thorough in explaining to me the differences in plans so I can make the best possible decision on our small-group health plan. Because of all of the changes in the healthcare industry, I will continue to rely on Denise for information and advice in the future."

- Jim Fortney (Client)

"Shannon has been a huge help to us in navigating the changes in the healthcare laws and our benefit plan designs. We would not be able to get this information from a website and the personal service he offers would not be easily obtained by working directly with the carriers."

Please do not eliminate their involvement in this important decision that must be made by human resource professionals and business owners. Their input and facilitation of the process is irreplaceable."

- Theresa Buchan (Client)

"Agents don't have the luxury that government employees with CMS have. We cannot just hang up the phone if we aren't feeling like dealing with the issue at hand. It's our job to service the client efficiently and make sure all of their needs are being met. Because our clients are our friends, family and neighbors, we want to do an excellent job for them. We find their needs and marry them with products. Agents spend long hours on the marketplace for their clients to get answers to simple questions that navigators don't have answers to. If we do a poor job, we lose our job. If Navigators do a poor job, they just hang up the phone (it's happened to me before)."

- Brandon Darin (Broker)

"I would predict that some agents will exit the



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

market entirely in the small group and individual market. This will limit the number of agents to serve the consumers. As additional carriers reduce commissions such as Aetna, BCBSM, and Priority Health have done, we will see many agents forced to seek other avenues of revenue because they are unable to operate their business efficiently."

- Michael Embry (Broker)

"Shannon Enders is our agent, and I can tell this past year would have been a nightmare without him and his staff. We had our open enrollment in March 2014. Prior to that time, Shannon met with the owners and me to present all our options and to educate us on the government-mandated changes. When it came time to make the presentation to our employees, Shannon and two of his staff were there to answer any questions our staff had. His office even prepared a benefit booklet that included all our benefits that our employees could take home.

After open enrollment, we had several enrollment and billing issues through our carriers. I

just contacted Shannon or one of his associates and they were the ones who worked with our carrier to get everything corrected. Had I not had an agent of Shannon's expertise, I believe I would have had to spend countless hours working through these issues. I really appreciate all that our agents do for us."

- Candy Crane (Client)

"I strongly believe that insurance agents/brokers are very valuable. As the office manager for a business with 30 employees, I cannot imagine taking the time to learn all that is necessary to keep our group insurance in order. We have had a long-standing relationship with a local agency that is familiar with our situation and the local economy. The agent searches for the best options for our business, presents us with a detailed and knowledgeable outline of all the options and suggests the best alternatives for us to make the final decisions. We

rely on our agent to keep us informed of all rules, regulations and deadlines.

Since he is familiar with our business and our employees, we feel comfortable that he will give us the best possible advice. Without this guidance, I would be spending countless hours trying to figure out things on my own, and then second-guessing my research. He saves us from making mistakes that could prove very costly to the business and to each individual group member. Without an agent to guide us, I'm sure we'd be spending a lot more staff time wading through all the red tape."

- Pat Fountain (Client)

"I use Lakeshore Employee Benefits and value their work very highly. The world of healthcare is so complicated and specialized that there is no way,

as the owner of a small firm, could keep up with the rules, services or rates. Shannon Enders is on top of all the issues and can answer my questions, whether basic or complicated.

I would not be able to confidentially provide this benefit to employees without his help. This is true from a legal standpoint as well as other items such as costs, options, employee questions and changing rules. Healthcare costs are very large and employees desire help with healthcare costs, so this is an important company issue. I need Shannon to help me through this at least once a year."

- Robert Goodheart (Client)

"A male employee of one client was diagnosed with prostate cancer and was advised by his health plan that the approved service was a traditional surgical procedure. After considerable research with my help, the employee discovered that an alternate service utilizing a laser device was both available (though out-of-network) and preferred over the traditional scalpel approach. The employee, armed with his new found information, fearing for his life

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



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

and understanding that the laser service would create less blood loss, a faster return to work, a better outcome, and less pain had the service performed anyway. I subsequently assisted him when his claim was denied.

With convincing statistical evidence, my personal efforts to convince the carrier that the "standard of care" was not an invasive procedure but, in fact, the non-invasive laser procedure proved successful. The carrier agreed to pay for the out-of-area service making the employer (who was prepared to "self-fund" the claim) extremely happy. The employee was grateful for my help and this left me with the immense satisfaction that I had a hand in helping a man regain hope that his medical diagnosis was not an immediate death sentence."

- James Kenyon
(Broker)

"I have been working with Denise for little over a year now with Miedema Auctioneering.

She has been an unbelievable asset to me and to this company. She has guided me through every aspect of healthcare reform. She assists me with any questions I have within hours of sending her an email. She also has been incredible to every employee in the company when they contact her directly for questions. She is insistent on having the employees contact her so she can check on errors in bills and make sure that they are being covered/charged properly.

She has even come to both of our locations personally to explain to our employees all the changes

happening during our healthcare renewal. She is positive, professional and, most important, extremely easy to talk to. She understands how people think, and is sure that myself and my employees understand everything completely.

She is also constantly striving to push our company to the next level, informing us on how we can access more information and how we can get more involved in our own healthcare. She even helped develop and execute a wellness program for our company. With all the healthcare changes and requirements of companies that are this size, it is nearly impossible for someone like me who is an HR

team of one to keep up to date with it all. Never have I felt left out or lost while I have been working with Denise. I literally cannot imagine doing my job without her and her assistance."

- Lisa
Zimmerman
(Client)



"Our company is extremely fortunate to have a helpful and thoughtful insurance brokerage company and agent whom we contact no less than 50 times a year. We are always looking for guidance on questions and concerns about our coverage, help with individual employee's health problems, and counseling us through the ever-changing regulations of PPACA.

Small-business owners have enough to do without becoming health insurance professionals. If Washington, DC, is really asking whether insurance



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

becoming health insurance professionals. If Washington, DC, is really asking whether insurance agents and brokers are needed, they should ask their small-business constituency some very pointed questions because they do not understand how much of a burden employee benefits has become."

- Ken Wentworth (Broker)

"Shannon has always been a HUGE help to me. Like most businesses, the health insurance business changes frequently. He keeps me informed and compliant with all the changes, and helps to keep our employees up to date on the changes. I don't know what I'd do without his invaluable help. It is way too much work to do my job and also try to keep up with the health industry! Please know that we highly value the work that he does for us."

- Annette Bazinaw (Client)

"Denise VanPutten has been very helpful to our office since she came on board at Lighthouse in originating our yearly insurance renewal options and servicing our account whenever we need it. She is prompt and attentive via phone calls, emails and in person when we have special requests such as on-site Q & A sessions when our employees need an overview of the plan and terms we selected each year. She also helps with claim issues that arise during the year that our employees are not able to correct themselves and any time we have employees either added, changed or removed from a plan due to a status change, miscellaneous questions due to changes that have been occurring to a small business of our size (under 50 employees) due to the change in the ACA program and assistance in paperwork processing that is more detailed/comprehensive than the norm.

We feel she has been very timely, detailed and professional at all times. We look to her in the future as further assistance is needed. In turn, the people she works with at Lighthouse, such as Sandy Spratling, are extremely competent in their field and as a team. Denise and her team are assets we couldn't do without in our monthly and yearly business op-

erations."

- Bridget Dupont-Tingley (Client)

"I have spent many hours with a client for whom I am trying to obtain health insurance, both for her and her older child with a preexisting condition. I have and am continuing to research carriers that will best suit her needs while coming up with temporary solutions for her daughter. She could not thank me enough. In fact she said, "Where would I be if I had tried to do this myself online!" She was very grateful for the help that my expertise could afford her."

- Barbara Todd-Leffel (Broker)

"We have a client who had a child that was without coverage and found out that the child had cancer. In early February, we were able to secure her coverage and get the hospital paid in less than four weeks.

We also assist companies in the day-to-day administration of benefit programs. With all of the new laws that have passed over the past 10 years, most small employers do not



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

new laws that have passed over the past 10 years, most small employers do not have the money to hire a full time HR professional. Benefit brokers not only help secure coverage but also help manage many day-to-day activities. A good example of this is the new COBRA subsidy and how we educate our employers as to what they need to do to stay within the law. We assist them in complying with these types of laws. "Our elected officials need to understand the very important role we play in educating our clients about the plans they have and how to navigate the complex healthcare system."

- James A. Milkey II (Broker)

"I'm writing regarding the recent plight of the health insurance industry and how recent changes have affected this great state of Michigan. I have been the director of an

insurance agency for over thirty years, and I've seen tremendous changes during my tenure. I have recently seen the great impact MLR could potentially have with our business and also the impact it will have on small

business employees throughout this state. If the MLR continues ahead unchecked, we will surely be out of business. If a great number of agents drop off of the radar, businesses will be scrambling to understand their options and in weeding through the minefield of different policies. The MLR will drive insurance rates to the public even higher than they are and that is hard to imagine. Already we have reduced our services because we simply cannot afford to run our business as we have over the years."

- Dave Bommarito (Broker)

"I have a client group composed of seven nursing homes whose primary source of revenue is Medicaid. Revenue from the state normally arrives around the 20th of the month and unfortunately, the prepaid health plan premium is due on the first of

the month. This client is continually in a delinquent payment position, which causes employees to be denied medical services as the providers' online eligibility systems advises that coverage is not in effect. Through our advocacy, we have requested an exception to standard procedures and received approval from the carrier to change payment due dates from the 1st of the month to the 20th of the month. This agreement will improve both the client's cash flow and delivery of services to employees."

- James Kenyon (Client)

"Aetna has withdrawn from the state I practice in, Principle sold its block of health business and there have been others. This decreases competition. There have been several withdrawals from the child only policy market because of the preexisting conditions

requirements. Others have indicated they will reserve the right to decline or simply jack their rates up. We see plan menus offered by companies with reduced benefits and rate quotes skyrocketing. There is great fear that many small employers will be

priced out of the market and be forced to drop private coverage to open the door for complete federal take-over with a single player plan."

- Neale Musolff (Broker)

"We are basically a two carrier state now. This is very unhealthy. Not having competition results in higher costs for everyone. With higher premiums, employers are capping out their overall liability pushing more out of pocket costs through plan design onto the employees. The higher the out of pocket expenses, the less likely someone will seek treatment. What may have been a minor element becomes major involving the higher cost elements of emergency room or advanced radiology, emergency room or advanced radiology, for example."

- Jamie Mills (Broker)

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.



BROKERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

"Many insurers have already left the Michigan market, and I fear that many more will follow as they feel it is not a good business decision to continue should the MLR regulations come into play. In addition to Aetna and Principal backing out, Humana is focusing on ancillary sales and American Community is out of business. This is creating a stagnant market. This inevitably will lead to higher prices, limited options, and additional costs being passed on to the employee."

- Ted Maitland (Broker)

"If we were not paid a commission to sell and service products, we would not do so unless we were allowed to charge a fee for our advice. I believe that the feds are under the mistaken impression that an individual or a small business will be able to go to a website and easily compare one plan with another. This is incorrect. They need an experienced agent to guide them through the system, design a plan that works best for them, and guide them through the enrollment and educational parts of employee benefits."

- Paul Rathburn (Broker)

"The most glaring loss would be the lack of access to the agent's experience when it comes to researching and reviewing insurance carriers and options for Michigan clients. An experienced agent can assist individuals in making informed decisions with regards to the options. Without an agent, most would be "lost". As I have mentioned, healthcare is not simple; it is complicated, especially the business of comparing carriers and coverage.

Without an agent you will see a dramatic increase in customer complaints as they will not understand what they signed up for. How does an average person decide between and HAS, HRA, and FSA not to mention the many different PPO and HMO options that are available? An agent is there to navigate the daily customer service questions that arise and this would be lost as well."

- Theodore Souphis (Broker)

