



UnitedHealthcare to Administer Medicare Advantage (PPO) Prescription Drug Plan Effective January 1, 2023

BY J. DAVID WALES, PEEHIP DIRECTOR

As of the most recent competitive professional service procurement cycle, UnitedHealthcare will administer the PEEHIP Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) Plan for Medicare-eligible retirees and covered Medicare-eligible dependents of retirees effective January 1, 2023. UnitedHealthcare was the previous administrator of PEEHIP's Group Medicare Advantage (PPO) Plan. PEEHIP is pleased to be partnering with them again to offer enhanced benefits and services to Medicare-eligible retirees.

The move to UnitedHealthcare has resulted in significant savings for the PEEHIP plan, strengthening its financial position. Therefore, effective January 1, 2023, PEEHIP will pass these cost savings on to Medicare-eligible retirees for the contract's three-year term ending December 31, 2025. After that date, the cost to members could increase based on the terms of the next contract.

Current PEEHIP Humana members will receive a new PEEHIP UnitedHealthcare ID card late this year for use starting January 1, 2023. Members will not experience any reduction in benefits due to this change. This plan offers the same custom, high-quality benefits and services PEEHIP retirees have today under the current plan, plus exciting new additional services. Members covered in this plan will continue to have the freedom to see any doctor or provider who accepts Medicare and the plan nationally, as long as they have not opted out of or been excluded from Medicare. This maintains the same superior access to care as today.

Watch for upcoming *PEEHIP Advisor* newsletters for more information about this change. In the summer and fall, both onsite and virtual educational meetings will be held throughout the state to ensure PEEHIP members are well-educated on the new plan. Dates, times, and locations will be announced soon. ●



Keeping Career Employees Working

BY NEAH M. SCOTT, LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

The Legislature recently made a much-needed improvement to RSA survivor benefits. This new law is already making a significant difference for many families of RSA members. The law encourages entire groups of public employees, such as teachers, police officers, healthcare workers, and any member who enjoys their profession, to continue working. We all know public employees who love their job and want to continue helping the public. It benefits the members and the state to encourage them to continue working, especially when there is a shortage of trained professionals to replace them.

Members, at retirement, can ensure that their beneficiaries will receive 100% of their lifetime benefit when they die. Under the prior law, a member eligible for retirement but still employed could only provide 50% of their lifetime benefit to their spouse if they died before retirement.

As you can imagine, the previous law dealing with survivor benefits led to some heartbreaking situations when a member died unexpectedly in active service or before their planned retirement date. It also may have forced some members to retire early to ensure their families were financially protected.

While this has been a problem for years, a few legislators championed the issue last legislative session and ensured that the Legislature made changes to better provide for the families of our deceased public employees. Under the new law (Act 2022-184), if a retirement-eligible member dies in active service, their spouse (if also the designated beneficiary) can receive 100% of the member's lifetime benefit.

This change has already had a significant impact on the lives of the families of RSA members. Since the law was passed, 23 spouses have benefited from this change. Most importantly, it has allowed members who enjoy what they are doing to make Alabama a better place to continue working past retirement eligibility without taking the risk of leaving their families with less.

This has been one of the most significant changes to the RSA's governing laws in recent years. While it may not impact every member, it has a considerable impact on the families it does affect. Once again, we thank the Legislature, with a SPECIAL THANKS TO THE BILL SPONSOR REP. CORLEY ELLIS, FOR MAKING SUCH A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE. ●

Federal Funds Available for Water and Sewer Problems

BY LANCE LEFLEUR, DIRECTOR, ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT (ADEM)

Thanks to hundreds of millions of federal dollars to assist in the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Alabama is taking advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to address longstanding problems plaguing water and sewer systems across the state.

Many of the nearly 1,100 public water and sewer systems in Alabama have significant repair and upgrade needs. In addition, some residents, such as those in the Black Belt, lack adequate water or sewer service, adversely affecting their living conditions and putting their health at risk.

Help, though, is on the way. In the January special session called by Gov. Kay Ivey to authorize the use of a portion of Alabama's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, the Legislature appropriated \$225 million for grants to address the state's most critical water and sewer needs. ADEM was designated to oversee the program.

Up to \$120 million will be awarded to public water and sewer systems with emergency or high-needs projects, with

special consideration given to projects that improve access to water or sewer services in communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19 or that lack local funding to complete the projects on their own. No local match funding is required for these projects.

An additional \$100 million in grants will be awarded to public water and sewer systems that may require local matching funds based on their ability to pay. These projects will be based on both system infrastructure and financial needs.

The Legislature also designated up to \$5 million for demonstration sewer projects in the Black Belt. These projects will target problems such as soil conditions that prevent wastewater from septic systems from being absorbed into the ground, failing sewer or septic systems, the use of "straight pipes" in the absence of a functioning septic system or sewer service, and other issues related to poor, sparsely populated, rural areas of the Black Belt.

The total – \$225 million – seems like a lot of money, and it is. The money will do

a lot of good work. Unfortunately, it will still only cover a relatively small portion of Alabama's water and sewer infrastructure needs.

That's why the state must prioritize the spending of the ARPA funding based on need and the ability of each community to help pay for the infrastructure work – with the priority going to the neediest and poorest communities.

ADEM has created a webpage, www.alabamawaterprojects.com, to provide the public information about the program and regular updates on grant applications. The webpage includes links to the application forms for the water and sewer projects.

Indeed, managing the allotment of hundreds of millions of dollars for hundreds of water and sewer projects across the state is a major undertaking and an additional challenge for ADEM's dedicated professionals. It is a challenge the department welcomes because we recognize the benefits can literally be life-changing for many of our citizens. ●

2022 Top 25 Historic Hotels of America Most Historic Golf Courses List Announced

THE GRAND HOTEL GOLF RESORT & SPA, AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION (1847) POINT CLEAR, ALABAMA

Golf course architect Perry Maxwell designed an 18-hole championship golf course for the Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa in Point Clear, Alabama, in 1947—the Grand Hotel's centennial, as it was established in 1847.

After World War II, a long-awaited retreat to the Mobile Bay resort offered weary Americans a chance to play Maxwell's brand new 7,104 yards of oak-lined links. It was a grand success. Another nine holes were added, first in 1967 and again in 1983. Today, there are two 18-hole golf courses at the resort's Lakewood Club: The Dogwood Course and



the Azalea Course.

Since 1947, The Lakewood Club has hosted former President Gerald Ford, European royalty, movie stars, and sports legends, along with legions of

local and visiting golfers. The Kenny Stabler Charity Golf Classic was held at The Lakewood Club for several years and hosted a who's-who of professional football players and other celebrities.

The Dogwood Course is well-kept and cared for: It was renovated in 2005 by the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail Team and again in 2018, all to give it a fresh and modern feel while retaining Maxwell's vision

for the course. In 2021, the Dogwood Course was the site of the U.S. Senior Women's Amateur championship, one of 14 championship tournaments run by the United States Golf Association. ●

Alabama Success Story Land Trust of North Alabama

Over the past 35 years, Land Trust of North Alabama has preserved over 9,000 acres in six counties to conserve natural resources and sensitive habitats and connect people with nature through outdoor recreation and environmental education.

These acres protect miles of waterways, sensitive habitats, wildlife corridors, and at least four known endangered or threatened species while also providing opportunities to research and learn more about our natural lands. Land Trust, located in Madison County, began from a community effort to preserve the western side of Monte Sano Mountain adjacent to downtown Huntsville. But as the community grew, so did the broader need for a conservation effort to balance increased development across the region. Land Trust now serves the top ten counties of Alabama.

A significant portion of these protected lands are open to the public through eight nature preserves with over 70 miles of trails. Access is free, and trails are open from dawn to dusk daily. Visitors can enjoy hiking and biking on all Land Trust trails, horseback riding on two properties, and an 18-hole disc golf course at Chapman Mountain Nature Preserve. These spaces provide a much-needed outlet to relax, explore, and experience



all the physical and mental benefits that outdoor recreation provides. Volunteers help maintain and expand these trail systems, with work days held at least twice each month.

Various education programs share nature with all ages, fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of its value. Guided hikes and workshops offer opportunities to gain fascinating insight from knowledgeable guides or confidence for those unfamiliar with the outdoors. Environmental science-based field trips, school programs, and summer camps invite children to play outside and observe all the detail and wonder they find there. Whether the outdoors are new territory or familiar stomping grounds, the Land

Trust seeks to make all feel welcome to explore and, in doing so, strengthen knowledge of Alabama's natural importance.

Each season, miles of trail and untouched acres offer a new discovery. You can find trail maps, hiking tips, or become a Land Trust member (membership begins at \$35 annually) at landtrustnal.org.

This is a series of articles about Alabama Success Stories. Please let us know if you have a similar success story you would like to share with the RSA membership. You may contact us at communication.correspondences@rsa-al.gov. ●

Hanging Up Is Easy to Do...On Scam Calls!

BY JO MOORE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ADMINISTRATION

As the old song says, "Breaking up is hard to do," but hanging up is easy to do on scam calls. We all receive scam calls. Who has not been offered forgiveness of your student loans (even if you no longer have any), an extension of your car warranty, or the opportunity to avoid jail by paying your taxes over the phone? Many of these calls are easy to discern as scams, and hanging up is easy to do.

It is a bit harder to hang up, though, when the caller discusses your retirement benefit or health insurance because these benefits impact your daily living and

quality of life.

The RSA and PEEHIP reach out to members as needed to address retirement and health insurance issues. However, the RSA and PEEHIP will NEVER call, text, or email you and ask for your Social Security number, PID, birthday, checking account information, or credit card numbers. **The only time the RSA or PEEHIP will ask you for any identifying information is if you call or email us.**

It is important in this day and age to protect your personal information. Unfortunately, there are many scams and

many ways to scam. Below are some helpful tips on how to protect your personal information:¹

Tip No. 1: Do not answer unknown phone numbers. If you do not know who is calling, send it to voicemail. This is your best protection. Scammers can fake their phone number and make it look like it is from your area code. If the caller leaves a message instructing you to call them back, DO NOT CALL the number they provide. Instead, look the number up and call the number provided either by your last billing statement, website, or phone directory.

¹ Many of these helpful tips were provided by the Alabama Securities Commission. The Alabama Securities Commission provides free seminars on how to protect yourself from fraud. If you are interested in attending one of these seminars, please contact the Alabama Securities Commission at 800.222.1253.

Start Planning Your Summer Getaways at RSA's Outstanding Hotels, Spas, and RTJ Golf



Member Hotel
Discounts Webpage

RETIREMENT SYSTEMS OF ALABAMA
201 SOUTH UNION STREET
P.O. BOX 302150
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-2150

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MONTGOMERY, AL
PERMIT NO. 402

ENJOY YOUR SUMMER
A Special Deal
FOR RSA MEMBERS

The Battle House,

A Renaissance Hotel \$119

- July 1-3, 5-9, 15-16, 22-30 • August 1-3, 13-21, 24-31
- September 1, 4-10, 16-21, 25-27

The Battle House RSA Spa Package \$219

- July 5-6, 25-27 • August 1-3, 15-17, 24, 29-31
- September 5-7, 19-21, 26-27

Riverview Plaza \$109

- July 3-5, 8-9, 15-16, 29 • August 1-3, 13-15, 19, 21-31
- September 1-6, 10-13, 29-30

Grand Hotel \$127 plus a 15% resort fee

- July 5, 13, 18 • August 7-8, 14-17, 21-23, 28-29
- September 5-7, 11-12, 25-27

Grand Hotel RSA Golf Package \$199 plus a 15% resort fee

- July 5, 13, 18 • August 7-8, 14-17, 21-23, 28-29
- September 5-7, 11-12, 25-27

Grand Hotel RSA Spa Package \$259 plus a 15% resort fee

- July 5, 13 • August 7, 14, 16-17, 21, 23, 28
- September 6-7, 11, 25, 27

Marriott Shoals \$109

- July 10, 17, 24, 31 • August 7, 14, 21, 28
- September 11, 18, 25

Marriott Shoals RSA Spa Package \$210

- July 10, 17, 24, 31 • August 14, 21, 28
- September 11, 18, 25

Renaissance Ross Bridge \$119

- July 5, 18-19 • August 14, 21, 28
- September 6, 18, 25

Renaissance Ross Bridge RSA Spa Package \$223

- July 5, 18-19 • August 14, 21, 28
- September 6, 18, 25

Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort \$109 plus a 10% resort fee

- July 10, 24, 31 • August 14, 21, 28
- September 11, 18, 25

Auburn/Opelika Marriott Resort RSA Spa Package \$201 plus a 10% resort fee

- July 10, 24, 31 • August 14, 21, 28
- September 11, 18, 25

Prattville Marriott \$89

- July 5, 10, 17, 24-25, 31 • August 1, 14-15, 21-22
- September 4, 6-7

Renaissance Montgomery \$119

- July 7, 10-12 • August 7-8, 14-15
- September 4-6, 18

Renaissance Montgomery RSA Spa Package \$223

- July 7, 12 • August N/A • September 4-6, 18

Specific room requests may require additional charge.
Rates available the 1st of the month and
are not applicable to groups.

800.228.9290 Ask for RSA rate. **Promotional Code: R2A** on www.rsa-al.gov
Book Online and Save RSA \$4.



Hanging Up Is Easy to Do...On Scam Calls!

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Tip No. 2: Never give out personal information over the phone. Remember, a government agency and financial institution will not call and ask you to verify your Social Security number or bank account information. If someone calls claiming to be from the IRS, another government agency, or your bank, HANG UP. Find the actual number to call by going to the official website or find it on your last statement.

Tip No. 3: Be wary of any call that requires you to "act now." If someone calls claiming you must "act now," HANG UP. If you are concerned that the call may be legitimate, contact the service provider or benefit directly using the telephone number found on the official website or your last statement.

Tip No. 4: Beware of the information that you share on social media. A scammer may appear to know you based on your social media profile or posts and then use that information to lure you into providing more identifying information. It is best to limit sharing personal information in a public forum.

If you are ever in doubt about a caller, Hang Up ... It is easy to do. It is better to be safe than sorry! ●



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