

PLOT POINTS

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Voluntary claims integration: Beyond the buzzword

THE CONCEPT OF voluntary benefit claims integration is generating a lot of buzz. More carriers are offering it, employers are seeking it, but what does it mean? And what do brokers need to be aware of as they discuss it with clients?

Claims integration is the concept of using data found in processing a claim to identify other claim-eligible coverages an employee might have. It has the potential to remove the employee burden of remembering all the coverages they own and filing separate claims. It is a meaningful enhancement of the overall claims experience and ensures that employees utilize the benefits they pay for and own.

Employers consider claims integration one of the most important factors in selecting a voluntary carrier. Our 2020 *The Employer Viewpoint MarketVision™* Report found that, after enrollment factors (tools, calculators, advice and carrier assistance), price/value of product, and ease of administration, 67% of employers are looking for carrier support of claims integration.

In 2020, only 38% of carriers offered claims integrations of any kind. Less than a year later, 70% are offering it, according to our 2021 *Claims Practices of Voluntary Carriers Spotlight™* Report.

So what do brokers need to know when discussing it with employers? Understanding the nuance/detail is critical. Consider asking the following questions:

1. What product lines can be integrated?

Some carriers are able to integrate with disability claims, while others are able to integrate within their voluntary product portfolio. Some are integrating with medical claims, either with their own medical plan or with another carrier's plan.

2. Will the employee be notified of an eligible claim or will a claim be automatically opened?

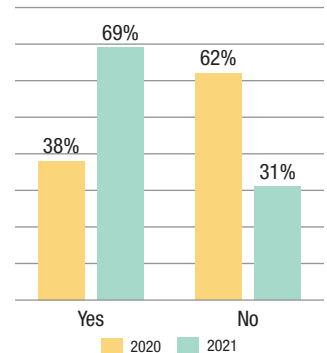
Most carriers that integrate claims with medical plans notify claimants about the possibility of filing a voluntary claim. A few automatically open eligible/applicable voluntary product claims. For disability claims, carriers more often automatically open claims versus a simple notification.

3. Are all of the data collection/privacy pieces between multiple systems in place to ensure smooth delivery?

Claim integration often requires data to be collected and held by disparate parties. There are ways to bring the pieces together, but no universal best practice approach exists. Many players, like ben admin, decision-making and communication systems, are bringing solutions to market, so you coordinate with a variety of vendors in addition to carriers. Discuss data collection/privacy logistics with all parties to ensure streamlined execution.

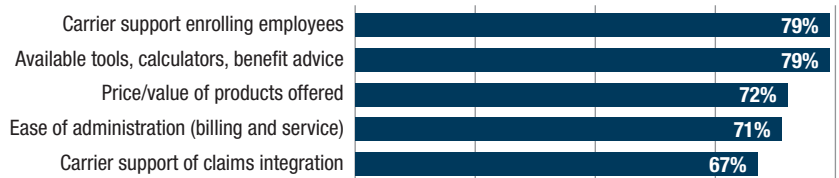
Finally, remember that claims integration is one component in the overall experience, and other pieces are critically important. Does the carrier allow easy claims submission via a variety of methods? Offer smooth communications and timely payments? All these components are paramount to the health of the case.

Carrier claims integration offered



Source: 2020 *Product Trends Frontline Report & 2021 Claims Report*

Top 5 importance factors in choosing a carrier (Percent rating as 4 or 5)



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