

Benefit Fact Sheet

What is it?

Employee self-service (ESS) is a web-based means for employees to access benefits information and make benefit elections or changes. Employees are guided through online procedures using employee demographic data, plan comparisons, and decision support tools.

Simple ESS solutions make forms available online that must be printed, completed and submitted in hardcopy form. Some solutions may allow for forms to be completed online before printing and submitting. The most sophisticated solutions allow an employee to complete all or most transactions on-line, bypassing the need for any paper.

Many ESS solutions offer simplified administration, by fully integrating with the insurance carrier systems. This integration streamlines the enrollment process and in some cases can provide you with automated retroactive billing functionality.

Why offer it?

- Available 24/7.
- Reduces administrative burden and employee inquires.
- Eliminates manual data entry errors and increases enrollment accuracy.
- Provides integrated and automated premium billing.
- Staff can focus on more strategic versus administrative issues.
- Creates value for the company's benefit package.
- Integrates information and decision support tools to provide employees with the information needed to make better and more informed decisions.

What types of employers offer it?

Organizations looking to streamline their enrollment processes and overall benefits administration.

What size employers offer it?

ESS applications work best for employers with 200+ participants due to costs and possible complexity of implementation and maintenance. In some cases, employers with less than 50 employees may be able to use limited features of ESS.

What are the critical underwriting or participation requirements?

- Ease of use, intuitive screens, transaction speed, and workflow management.
- Text content customization/development.
- Systems ability to handle events, i.e., New Hires, Open Enrollment, & Family Status Changes.
- Rules driven / built in smart edits (error or warning messages).
- Degree of complexity for benefit plans and coverage.
- On-line reference capabilities, e.g. SPD storage and links.
- Carrier connectivity.
- Automated billing.

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What's new in this area?

Web-based ESS systems are predominant, all but eliminating Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems. With carrier connectivity, enrollment information is automatically transmitted to the insurance carriers. In most cases, no paper forms or manual data entry is required.

Many systems are also automated billing solutions. The ESS solution is linked with the carrier systems and can produce invoices that calculate retroactive dues. This not only saves time in performing premium billing, but also assists in ensuring you are not over or under paying premiums.

How much does it cost?

Cost varies by system. Pricing models typically consists of an implementation fee plus an ongoing monthly fee per employee ranging from \$1.50 to \$12. Additional fees may apply for carrier connectivity and plan renewals.

Informational link(s)

- [Online self service gaining popularity amongst employees](#)

Pros and cons

Pros

- Improves data accuracy and enrollment timeliness.
- Reduces administration burden, improves efficiency.
- Reduces need for and expense of printed materials.
- Available 24/7 to both employee and eligible dependents.

Cons

- Not cost justifiable for most employers with less than 100 employees.
- All employees need Internet access through either a PC or kiosk at work.
- Requires staff resources or a partner to implement, administer and maintain.
- Requires training of HR staff and employees.
- May require a shift in corporate culture.
- May require new interfaces (HR, payroll, etc.).

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