



## Willis Voluntary Benefits

### The Benefits Gap

The prognosis is grim: Healthcare costs will continue to rise faster than employers and their employees can tolerate. At each renewal, employers begin anew the process of cost shifting and contemplating plan design changes in an effort to offset these rising costs. Some companies have had to eliminate certain benefits in order to continue providing basic medical coverage. The gap between a benefits package that employees want and need and what the company can afford is rapidly growing wider. What can be done to mitigate this trend?

### Bridging the Gap with Voluntary Benefits

A voluntary benefits program allows you to expand your employees' options without increasing your direct costs. Such a program does not duplicate coverage but complements your core benefit program by acting as a gateway for coverages such as Individual Life, Dental, Auto, Homeowners and Liability, Long-Term Care, Critical Illness, Pet insurance, Retiree programs, Identity Theft and Disability.

One size does not fit all, however. Employers need to think strategically about program design. Benefits are only effective if they provide what employees want but cannot obtain through the core coverage.

To create the right voluntary benefits package, several steps must be taken.

- Identify gaps in your core program, highlighting areas where voluntary benefits can bring additional or increased coverage to your population
- Work with your employees to determine what types of benefits they need
- Determine how best to integrate the new offerings into your benefits program

### The Willis Advantage

Employees look to human resources (HR) professionals to be experts in employee benefits; the same holds true for voluntary benefits, even if the employer is not providing them directly. Your HR staff may have limited voluntary benefits experience, while facing many competing demands on their time. This is where the

Willis Employee Benefits Practice can help. We can be of service in every step of the program development and implementation process. We offer:

- **Client focus.** Every interaction is focused on you and your employees. Customer service and hands-on involvement are priorities of the Willis Client Advocacy service model.
- **Customization.** Willis can help you design a voluntary benefits strategy to support your business objectives and integrate with your existing benefit programs.
- **Communication.** Because the value of a benefits program is determined in large measure by employee perception, the key to a successful voluntary benefits offering is effective communication with employees. We can work with you to design employee communication materials that explain what is being offered and why benefits are important.
- **Efficient and Effective Enrollment.** We will work with you to determine the best method for enrolling your employees. Depending on your population disbursement, employees' familiarity with voluntary benefits and your overall corporate philosophy, enrollment options might include one-on-one meetings with salaried benefit specialists, group meetings, internet/intranet enrollment, direct mail and/or a call center.
- **Convenience and Reliability.** Employees value benefits they can buy at work and they appreciate the convenience of payroll deduction. By offering a voluntary benefits program, you can provide benefit options that employees will appreciate and that will help in your recruiting and retention programs.
- **Willis Insurance Solution Engine (WISE).** This e-commerce platform provides products for small businesses and individuals who are either employees or members of an association. It is supported by a trained staff of insurance counselors and a call center. With WISE, franchise and affinity clients can offer their employees and members access to a variety of products and discount cards through a customized web portal via bank draft (VISA, MasterCard). There is no administration required by the franchise or affinity firm, and Willis provides the marketing materials to help promote the service. All that needs to be done is to market the platform to the target audience.