

# The Benefits Advantage

HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION

Providing employee benefits tools and resources for the State of Georgia  
September 2023

## Open Enrollment for 2024 Flexible Benefits — For Moments That Matter

BY BENALYTICS



**Y**ou are important to the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) — Human Resources Administration (HRA) because you play a critical role in helping employees understand, choose, and use their benefits. To support you, we're strengthening and reframing the Flexible Benefits Program to place its advantages front and center.

Meet **Flexible Benefits for You**. Its new look (and logo) reflect that the program is meant for you — and that it's better than ever. It brings employees the broadest range of options ever, to protect themselves and their families — whatever life brings their way. Its benefit options are best in class, including features customized for our statewide employee group. And the costs are uniformly competitive, with many plans available at the lowest rates in the state.

This Open Enrollment runs from October 16 through November 4. We encourage you, and all employees, to take a fresh look at flexible benefits. Get the coverage you need — for the moments that matter!



### Health

- Dental Insurance
- Vision Care
- Flexible Spending Accounts

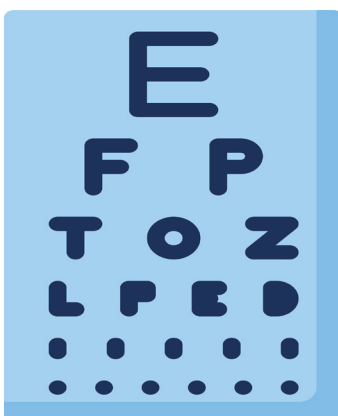
### Life

- Life Insurance (Employee, Spouse, and Child)
- Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance

### Finances

- Disability Insurance
- **NEW from VOYA Financial! Enhanced protection coverage**
  - Enhanced protection coverage
  - Critical Illness Insurance
  - Accident Insurance
  - Hospital Indemnity Insurance
  - Cancer Insurance
  - Long-Term Care Insurance

Open Enrollment runs from October 16 through November 4 (at 12:59 a.m. ET)



**Flexible Benefits for You** helps you protect your health, life, and finances. You can find coverage for the moments that matter most to you. You'll find vision, dental, life insurance, and flexible spending accounts. You can also access a collection of benefits for those "what-ifs" that can catch you by surprise: critical illnesses, accidents and injuries, hospital stays and cancer diagnosis. You'll also have the option to choose legal plan coverage for times you might need a lawyer.

### What Happens to Those Who Don't Enroll?

Those who do not act during Open Enrollment will carry their current benefit elections into 2024 — with one exception. Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) require a new sign-up each year. So, during Open Enrollment, those who want to continue an FSA in 2024 must make a new contribution election.

With the move to Voya, those with Aflac coverage will have new options. Some are automatic; others require enrollment.

## Newsletter Contents

- 1** — Open Enrollment
- 6** — Open Enrollment Training & DVS Update
- 7** — Flexible Benefits Premium Tool
- 9** — Mineral
- 10** — The Flexible Benefits Team
- 11** — Coming Soon

# Open Enrollment

## 2024 Benefits Enhancements & Upgrades

BY BENALYTICS

**D**OAS looks for ways to make flexible benefits even better each year. As sponsors of Georgia's largest voluntary benefits program, we use our buying power to your advantage. That's why employees will have more options, more coverage levels, and more favorable features than ever in 2024. Here is some of what you'll see during Open Enrollment.

### Costs

- 2024 benefit costs are largely unchanged. (A few rates are slightly higher; others are lower than they are today.) Overall, in a year when most plans are seeing a hike in rates, our cost structure is solid.
- Critical Illness and Accident insurance rates will be much lower. Premiums will be as much as 25% less — for plans that cover much more.

### NEW! Enhanced Protection Coverage

On January 1, Voya Financial will replace Aflac — and introduce two new benefit options. The plans pay cash benefits in the event of such "what-if" scenarios as:

- Critical illnesses,
- Accidents and injuries,
- Hospital stays, and
- Cancer diagnoses.

Those currently enrolled in an Aflac plan will receive an email in October with information about the change to Voya and the benefits it offers them.

### Life Insurance

MetLife is offering a limited-time window during Open Enrollment. Anyone who wants to increase their employee life insurance — or obtain it for the first time — can add 1 X Pay in coverage, guaranteed. No medical questions asked and no need to submit a statement of health form.

This offer benefits everyone. Those with coverage can expand it by electing an extra 1 X Pay. And those who do not have life insurance can now acquire this essential benefit.

### Disability Plans

- Both disability plans will be replaced by higher levels of pay in 2024.
- Employees who do not have Short-Term Disability coverage can choose to add it this year — without a late-enrollment penalty (no 60-day waiting period). This is another one-time opportunity during the upcoming Open Enrollment period.

### Health Care Flexible Spending Account

Employees can contribute more (as much as \$3,000), enabling even greater tax savings on eligible health care expenses.

#### Get More In 2024!

- The Dental DHMO option will now cover dental implants, with a slight increase in premium. The DPPO lifetime orthodontia limits reset in 2023, so additional benefits may be available.
- Your Vision Care plans give you low-cost access to Vision Access Value. It's the largest network of vision care providers in Georgia — and the only one with network-level benefits at Walmart and Sam's Club!
- The Legal plan offers unlimited access to attorneys — for help with such common needs as wills and power of attorney; home sale, purchase, or refinancing; family law; and traffic court (among many other things). With a choice of three plans, it's easy to find the level of coverage that's just right for you.

# Open Enrollment

## Introducing Enhanced Protection Coverage: Protection Against Life's "What-Ifs"

BY BENALYTICS

As you may know, DOAS rigorously monitors vendor services. We also reassess the insurance market to see that we keep our plans on the leading edge. And, as the largest voluntary benefits plan sponsor in the State, we use our purchasing power to secure the best features and lowest premium rates — for you.

It is on this basis that we're pleased to introduce Voya Financial. On Jan. 1, 2024, Voya will replace Aflac as the vendor for Critical Illness and Accident Insurance. They also offer new plan options to protect you from many of life's uncertainties like:

What if you or someone you love has a heart attack or stroke? Is diagnosed with a serious illness? Has an accident or needs an extended hospital stay? Unexpected events like these can happen to anyone. And when they do, they can create a lot of stress and financial pressure.

For instance, medical insurance covers treatment, but it doesn't cover everything. You could wind up with significant out-of-pocket expenses. Plus, you'll have all your other bills to pay. It can be hard to focus on recovery when you're worried about providing for your family.

### Enhanced Coverage Protection — New Benefits and More Options

The new Voya plans provide the coverage you need for the moments that matter most. While linked to medical events, these plans are not medical insurance. In fact, they provide only one thing: cash benefits — paid directly to you, to use as you see fit.

- New, separate **Critical Illness** and **Accident Insurance** options
- New benefits: **Hospital Indemnity** and **Cancer Insurance**
- New services: **Voya Cares** — support for those with disabilities or special needs (and for those who care for them (under all Voya plans); **Travel Assistance** — help with emergencies while traveling (Accident Insurance only).

These plans offer you outstanding value. That's because they . . .

- **Save you more** — Voya's Critical Illness and Accident insurance premiums are about 25% less. Their Hospital Indemnity and Cancer Insurance rates are among the industry's lowest.
- **Cover more** — Voya's plans pay higher benefits for certain occurrences and full benefits for more covered conditions.
- **Reward you more** — Each Voya plan pays you \$60 to \$100 when you and your covered family members get annual health screenings. Each year, you can receive this benefit for each covered person. It is a great way to offset the cost of coverage!
- **Save you time** — Voya makes it easy to apply for coverage. You can file claims online and reach a customer service rep 24/7/365.

Learn more by using the QR code to the right.



### A Seamless Transition

- Effective January 1, 2024, Voya will be added to payroll deduction and Aflac will be removed. All Aflac participants, and premium payments will transfer to the equivalent Voya option(s). Participants can, though, make other elections during Open Enrollment. They can also choose to add new coverage.
- Voya recognizes that not everyone has dependent children, or needs to cover them. For that reason, Voya makes this benefit available as a coverage option. Therefore, Aflac participants who want to continue covering their child/children must elect to do so during Open Enrollment.



# Open Enrollment

## Finding Your WHY

BY BENALYTICS



**D**OAS Flexible Benefits offer the broadest plan options in the State — and, in most cases, the lowest premium costs. Still, not everyone eligible for the program chooses to sign up.

One of the biggest obstacles may be knowledge. Not everyone knows why these benefits are so important. And even fewer are aware of why coverage under the DOAS plan may be better than other options they have.

To make headway this year, we're going to do more to explain the "WHYS" of benefits. This perspective may be useful to you, too. It can help you help employees address their benefit needs — and use the program to their best advantage.

Here is a preview of the "WHY" messaging you'll see throughout Open Enrollment. It addresses life insurance, a basic benefit everyone needs — but that over a quarter of our employees fail to elect.

### Why Life Insurance?

People need life insurance for many reasons. Some want financial security for loved ones while others consider it a key component of financial planning. And some of us just want the peace of mind of knowing we're caring for those who matter most.

This year, we encourage you to explore WHY before you decide whether to buy.

- 1. Parents** — Life insurance can protect your children's future by providing for childcare, insurance, education, and other critical expenses.
- 2. Homeowners** — If you have a mortgage, life insurance can help your family cover the monthly payments and keep their home.
- 3. Single-Income Households** — If you are the only earner in your household, life insurance can give surviving family members the resources they need to live the lives you had envisioned for them.
- 4. Debt-holders** — If you have loans or credit card balances, life insurance can protect your family members from the financial burdens of unpaid debt.

- 5. Minimal Savings in the Bank** — Life insurance can cover your family's immediate needs and help them prepare for the future.

### Why Life Insurance Through Flexible Benefits For You?

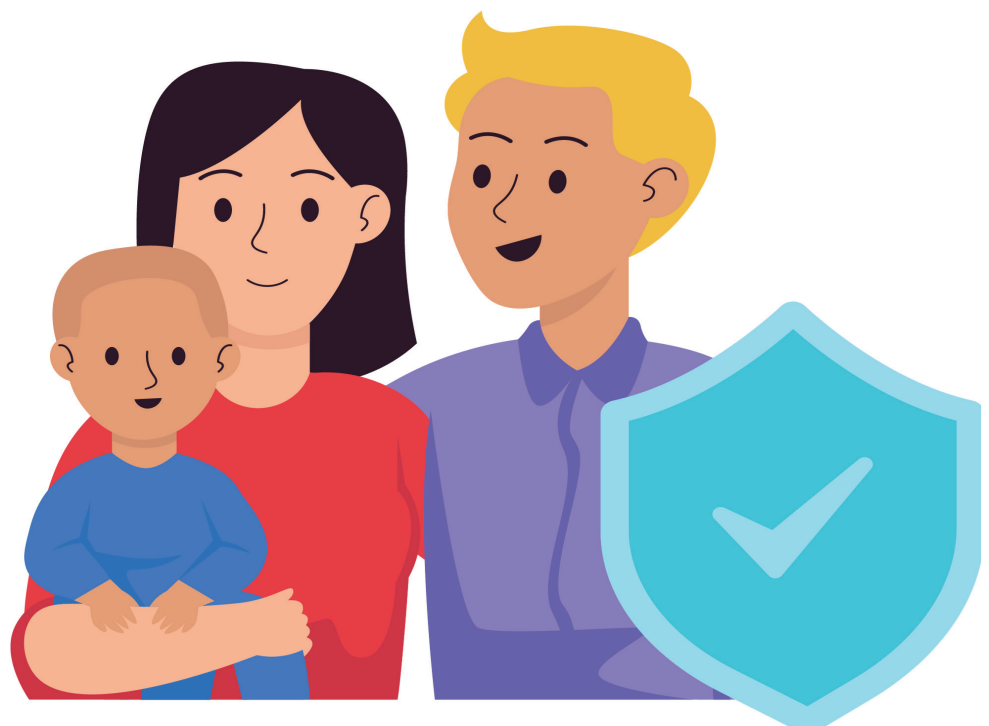
The MetLife plans offered under Flexible Benefits for You are of great value. They offer you the following advantages.

- The most benefit options, by far — are select coverage in increments of one- and 10 times your pay. No benefit program in the state offers as many benefit options.
- The highest maximum benefit — up to \$2 million.
- Stable, low-cost premiums — with most ages priced at their lowest cost since 2009.
- The chance to obtain this benefit for the first time — or, if you already have coverage, to increase it by one level — without providing evidence of insurability (EOI).
- Access to legal services for creating a last will and testament, advanced health care directive, and durable power of attorney — at no cost. These are documents that all families need. You can complete them either online or by working directly with an

### NOTE

**During this year's Open Enrollment, you can add 1 X Pay in employee life insurance coverage, guaranteed. This option is not offered every year, so pick up this essential coverage while you can!**

Watch for more information, including an interactive planning tool, coming soon.



# Open Enrollment

## Making the Most of Flexible Benefits For You

BY BENALYTICS

The more employees know about this program, the more they can make the most of it.

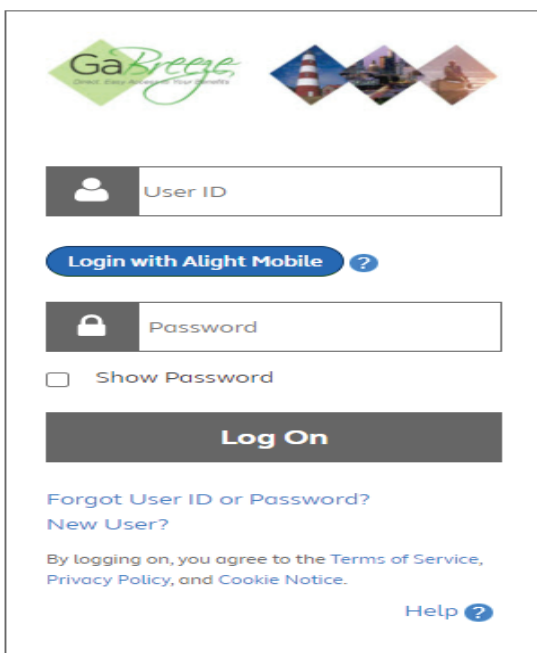
1. The **2024 Benefits Guide**, coming soon, will be more dynamic and user-friendly than ever. It's an interactive tool to give employees a sense of connection to benefits. It will help them understand their options — and use the program to their best advantage. Watch for it during Open Enrollment.
2. Also in the works: a new **Virtual Benefits Fair**. Each plan will have its own space, stocked with new, customized tools and resources. You'll find highlights and details, directories and calculators, videos and web links. It will be an online showroom of benefits — open 24/7/365.
3. **2024 Benefit Options and Premiums** can be found on [GaBreeze](#). No need for scratch pads and calculators: each screen reflects benefits and costs specific to each employee.
4. The **Flexible Benefits Premium Tool**, launched earlier this year, is a program for managing monthly premium payments. Its dashboard presents clear, concise invoicing data and simplifies the premium payment process. For more information, [click here](#). If you need help, email us at [flex.emailsupport@doas.ga.gov](mailto:flex.emailsupport@doas.ga.gov) or call 844-967-5533.

## Enroll with Ease

Open Enrollment for Benefits is October 16 through November 4, 2023 (12:59 a.m. ET)

Employees have two ways to sign up for flexible benefits.

1. Enroll online at [www.GaBreeze.go.gov](http://www.GaBreeze.go.gov).



2. Enroll using the Alight Mobile app, available at Google Play, the App Store. Make sure you have a current mobile phone on file with Alight to receive security codes for logging on to the mobile app.

**Have questions about the enrollment system?** Call 1-877-342-7339, weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET

## Benefits Reimagined — For Moments That Matter

As we kick off the 2024 Open Enrollment season, we invite you to view flexible benefits in a whole new light. Explore how the program has been upgraded. See why it is better than ever — and find the coverage you need for the moments that matter to you. When you do, you'll truly make the most of Flexible Benefits for You.

# Open Enrollment & DVS

## Important Open Enrollment Training Reminder



The Human Resources Administration - Flexible Benefits Program will host a training session in preparation for the 2023 Open Enrollment for Plan Year 2024 on **Tuesday, September 26, 2023, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

### The training will cover:

- 2024 Flexible Benefits Program enhancements
- A Closer Look at Flexible Benefits
- Enrolling for 2024 Flexible Benefits
- Open Enrollment Reminders

All Benefits/HR/Payroll Coordinators are invited and encouraged to participate. The purpose of the training is to provide you with the Open Enrollment knowledge and tools to assist your agency's employees through the Open Enrollment process.

The 2023 Open Enrollment presentation for Plan Year 2024 will be posted on the DOAS website following the training.

Please update your calendar if you plan to participate in the training session. To join the training session during the scheduled time, click [here](#).

---

## Dependent Verification Update

The Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) - Human Resources Administration (HRA) extended the Dependent Verification grace period to August 31, 2023. If participants have not submitted the required documents to verify their dependents, their dependents' coverage for the following Flexible Benefits plan options will end on September 30, 2023.

- Dental
- Vision
- Spouse Life
- Child Life
- Spouse Critical Illness

Participants have until December 29, 2023 to submit documents to have their dependents' coverage reinstated back to the date the coverage terminated. Retro premiums may be requested. To reinstate coverage, participants must provide the required documentation by December 29, 2023. Participants can utilize the reinstatement process, which is submitting the required documents to the Dependent Verification Center at Alight by logging in to [www.GaBreeze.ga.gov](http://www.GaBreeze.ga.gov). Click the 'Documentation Required For Your Dependents' link to be routed to Alight's Dependent Verification Services portal. On the site, participants will be able to upload documentation by clicking on Appeal in the red Action Needed box. Then, follow the steps to upload, fax or mail documentation, or call the Alight Dependent Verification Services team at 1-877-342-7339. The reinstatement process window will end 120 days after the final deadline (grace period) of August 31, 2023, which is December 29, 2023. Please note that if approved, coverage will be retroactively reinstated and make-up deductions may apply.

# Flexible Benefits Premium (FBP) Tool

## Flexible Benefits Financial Management Tools Update

BY CARLA GRACEN

The Department of Administrative Services (DOAS), Human Resources Administration (HRA), and Aight are working to roll out the Flexible Benefits Premium (FBP) tool and Reconciliation Report to the remaining state entities. The tools will simplify your monthly Flexible Benefits payment, reporting, and reconciliation processes.

The details about the FBP tool and the new Reconciliation Report are available on the [DOAS web page](#), including the Training Guide.

In the coming months, Aight will be making enhancements to some pages in the FBP to improve the user experience. Details will be provided to existing users via email.

The Manual/Hybrid entities that requested the new Reconciliation Report will receive an invitation this month from DOAS-HRA to attend a kickoff meeting where Aight will provide information and answer questions about the new report. Implementing the FBP tool for these entities will begin in the 4th quarter of 2023.

The Reconciliation Report design will save you time because it lists the employees with differences in their Flexible Benefits premium amounts from Aight's records and your HR/Payroll system's deduction amounts. Identifying the differences quickly determines the adjustments needed in the Aight system via the Employer website or your HR/Payroll system. An overview of the [Reconciliation Report](#) is in a PDF on the DOAS web page in the Additional Resources section.

The FBP tool rollout for the remaining entities will begin in February 2024 after most of your year-end HR/Payroll activities wind down and after Aight has made some enhancements to the FBP tool.



## Reconciliation Report Overview for Entities



The Reconciliation Report helps ensure payment accuracy by identifying differences between Aight's (GaBreeze) monthly coverage premium amounts for active employees and the monthly payroll deductions collected by each entity. The Entity Premium Billing Detail report lists all premiums that should have been withheld from employees' paychecks and can be compared to a Payroll Deductions report. To simplify the reconciliation process, a monthly Reconciliation Report is available, which automatically compares Aight's premium amounts to the actual Payroll deductions that were withheld. The Reconciliation Report only displays employees with differences between Flexible Benefits and Payroll.

### How the process works/entity responsibilities

#### TeamWorks Payroll Entities

The State Accounting Office (SAO) will submit a monthly interface to Aight that contains payroll deductions for all Flexible Benefits plan options withheld for the previous month. Aight will then compare this data to the Flexible Benefits monthly premiums. Once this process is complete, Aight will make the monthly Reconciliation Report available to **the entities where there are differences** so they can be addressed.

**Note:** Entities will not receive a monthly report if there are no differences for that period.

#### Manual and Hybrid Entities

Manual and Hybrid entities can obtain the Reconciliation Report if they provide Aight with a monthly interface containing actual payroll deductions for all Flexible Benefits plan options taken during the previous month for the coverage month's premiums. To start the process to receive the report, email [flex.emailsupport@doas.ga.gov](mailto:flex.emailsupport@doas.ga.gov) to obtain the standard data interface template with instructions.

### 5 Steps to Reconciliation

Step #	Step Description	Timing	Example	Comments
1	Aight Starts Premium Calculation Process	1st of Month	Monday, May 1, 2023	May Coverage Premiums
2	Entity confirms payroll and sends Aight payroll actuals	2nd Friday of the Month	Friday, May 12, 2023	April Payroll Deductions
3	Aight runs compare process	3rd Wednesday of the Month	Wednesday, May 17, 2023	
4	Aight posts the Reconciliation Report* with the compared results in the Flexible Benefits Premium tool	3rd Friday of the Month	Friday, May 19, 2023	
5	Each entity reviews its respective Reconciliation Report and addresses differences as needed	ASAP by each entity, depending on how it wants to manage any changes flowing through the process		

\*The Reconciliation Report will only be created and posted if the compared results identified any differences.

### How to Access the Reconciliation Report

Report Type	Description	Action
Entity Premium Billing Detail	Report shows participant plan level of detail of premium activity associated with the current billing cycle.	<a href="#">View Reports</a>
Entity Premium Billing Summary	Report shows summary level detail of invoice on Entity level (details by plan not participant).	<a href="#">View Reports</a>
Reconciliation Report	Report shows participant plan level detail discrepancies between the monthly premium amount versus the monthly deduction amount.	<a href="#">View Reports</a>

1. Log into the Flexible Benefits Premium tool.
2. In the top menu bar, hover over "More" and select "Reports."
3. Click on "View Reports" on the row for the report "Reconciliation Report."
4. Select the applicable month you need.

### How to Use the Report: Steps to Take

1. Log into the Flexible Benefits Premium tool.
2. Access the Reconciliation Report for the specific month and download.
3. If there is no report for your entity, there are no differences for the current coverage month. No further action is needed.
4. If there is a report for your entity, review the employees on the report.
5. An employee appears with either a negative or positive variance (column J).
  - A **negative variance** means the premium amount billed (column H) was **higher** than the payroll deduction (column I).
  - A **positive variance** means the premium amount billed (column H) was **lower** than the payroll deduction (column I).
6. To resolve the variance, determine if:
  - The employee was hired, terminated, or transferred.
  - There were any coverage changes due to life events.
  - If so, do all systems, entity HR/Payroll and GaBreeze, reflect the above action(s) with the correct dates? If not, make the correct transaction(s) in the appropriate system.
    - If all transactions are properly reflected in all systems, is the variance due to the timing of the process?
    - Was the action done after the premium was calculated? If so, the variance should resolve itself the next month.

### For Additional Training and Information

Visit the [DOAS website](#) for more details about the Flexible Benefits Premium tool and reports



# Keep your teeth in the picture of health.

SmartScan is a simple oral health screening you can do from home.



If you avoid dental visits – whether due to costs, inconvenience or dental anxiety – SmartScan provides a fast, free and painless way to stay on top of your oral health.

## What is SmartScan?

SmartScan is a unique, at-home dental screening tool that lets you use your smartphone to take a series of guided dental photos. Within minutes, you'll receive a professional assessment from a Cigna Healthcare<sup>SM</sup> dentist.

## What SmartScan is not.

SmartScan is not a replacement for a full exam and x-rays done in a dental office, which are important ways to protect your teeth, gums and overall good health.



**10% to 35%**  
of adults put off dental visits due to fear of going to the dentist.\*

## Yes, it's that easy.

### Here's how SmartScan works:

- Using your smartphone, you'll take a series of photos of your teeth and gums
- You'll be instructed how to hold the camera and what to expect in terms of the types of photos needed

### Once completed:

- Your photos will be uploaded to [Dental.com](https://www.dental.com)
- Each photo is examined through artificial intelligence (AI) to determine potential cavities or areas of concern
- A Cigna Healthcare Dental network dentist will then review the photos and AI data
- You will receive a report that includes an overall rating of **green**, **yellow** or **red**, indicating your oral health status

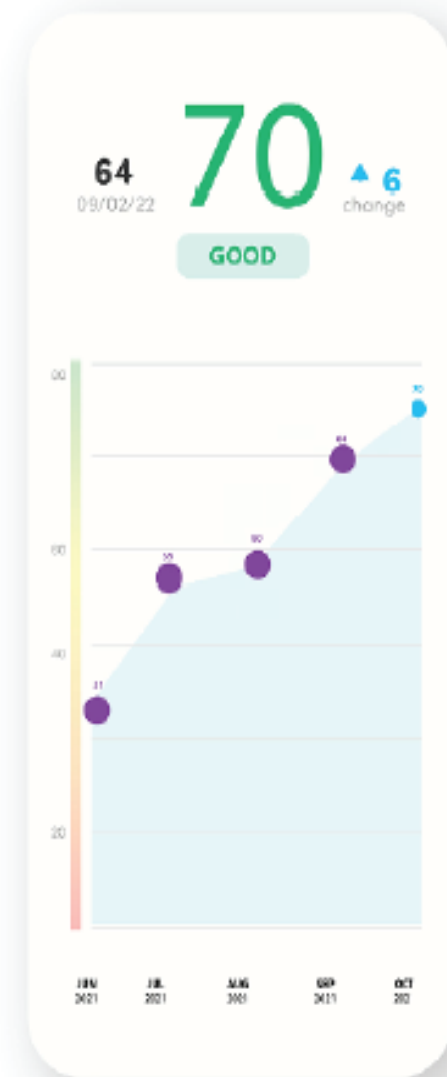




If your oral rating is green, you'll have peace of mind knowing your mouth is healthy. If your oral rating is yellow or red, you'll have an opportunity to book a teledentistry appointment through Cigna Healthcare Dental virtual care,\*\* or be referred to a Cigna Healthcare Dental in-network provider.

### The many benefits of SmartScan.

- SmartScreen screenings are available at no additional cost\*\*\*
- The process takes approximately five minutes from start to finish
- You'll get an understanding of your oral health status plus health tips on how to improve your oral health



\* DentalInsurance.com. "Survey: Why Do People Delay Dental Care?" August 23, 2022.

\*\* Cigna Healthcare provides access to virtual care through national teledental care providers via myCigna.com as part of your plan. Providers are solely responsible for any treatment provided to their patients. Video chat may not be available in all areas or with all providers and is a requirement for this service. See your plan materials for the details of your specific Dental plan. This service is separate from coverage for virtual dental care obtained by your Dental plan's network and may not be available in all areas. A referral is not required for this service.

\*\*\* Currently limited to Cigna Healthcare Dental customers as part of a Cigna Healthcare Dental pilot program.

This document is provided by Cigna Healthcare solely for informational purposes to promote customer health. It does not constitute medical advice and is not intended to be a substitute for proper dental care provided by a dentist. Cigna Healthcare assumes no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of the use, misuse, interpretation or application of any information supplied in this document. Always consult with your dentist for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing and care recommendations.

All Cigna Healthcare products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of The Cigna Group. The Cigna Healthcare name, logo and other Cigna marks are owned by Cigna Intellectual Property, Inc.

# From Our Vendors

## Easing the Load: Making HR, Compliance, and Training Manageable

BY JOHN UHAS

The Mineral logo is displayed in white text on a solid orange rectangular background. The word "Mineral" is written in a clean, sans-serif font, with a small diamond-shaped symbol above the letter 'i'. A trademark symbol (TM) is located at the top right of the word.

**H**R management can be daunting. There are personnel issues to resolve, changing mandates and new ones on the way, and pressure to keep job descriptions, handbooks, policies, and training up to date. Plus, all the other responsibilities that come with the territory.

**But you don't have to go it alone anymore.**

Thanks to the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Human Resources Administration (HRA), Mineral is here to help.

[Mineral](#) is a 24/7/365 resource that takes the guesswork out of HR and compliance. If your entity participates in the Flexible Benefits Program, the [Mineral platform](#) is now free to you. It can make things a lot easier to manage.

- Mineral's alerts and newsletters will keep you informed on regulatory issues. You'll know what's on the horizon and how it could affect entities like yours.
- Mineral's virtual HR and Compliance Library gives you real-time access to over 3,000 continuously updated articles, videos, and guides. They include templates you can complete to fulfill a range of HR mandates.
- Mineral's warehouse of over 150 employee training courses is robust. Regularly updated, it includes such subjects as Cybersecurity, Customer Service, Communications, Human Resources, Professional Development, Workplace Safety, and more.
- You also have access to personal support. Mineral's Hotline connects you to experienced HR professionals who work with you one-on-one to address questions and concerns. Their expert advice can help you navigate nearly any HR or Compliance challenge you may face.

**Note:** The state operates under uniform HR policies and practices that support compliance with applicable regulations. DOAS HRA offers advice, counsel, and resources to state agencies. Mineral is not a replacement or alternative to these critical DOAS services. Mineral is instead a supplemental resource, available to help agencies frame HR policies and practices to fit their culture and address their business needs.

### Tapping Into Mineral

Getting started is easy. Let John Uhas from Benalytics Consulting Group, LLC, DOAS' broker, know whom you'd like to set up with Mineral at [juhas@benalytics.com](mailto:juhas@benalytics.com). He'll take care of the rest.

Each day, [Mineral](#) supports the needs of [over one million employers](#). Take advantage of your free chance to tap in!

# Our Flex Benefits Team

## Al Howell, Deputy Commissioner



Al has extensive HR management experience at the state, county, and municipal government levels. He led support services in the areas of human resources and administrative operations. He previously served as the Director of Administrative Services with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Al is currently responsible for leading enterprise human resource functions, including talent management, HR policy and compliance, compensation, and benefits. Al's vision for HRA is to become a proactive agent of change by offering strategically focused services which will help our clients meet the demands of the modern workforce. Al holds a BS in Political Science from Georgia Southern University and an MPA from Georgia Southern University. He is a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach. Al enjoys family time and jogging.

## Carla Gracen, Director of Compensation & Benefits

Carla joined HRA in April of 2018. She enjoys providing value to State of Georgia entities and employees through various projects, including the enhanced Benefits portal and streamlining processes with digital transformation. Previously, she managed outsourced HCM products and HR, Benefits, Payroll, and Accounting departments. Carla's career and personal travels took her to 48 states. She enjoys conducting industry presentations on various HCM topics. Carla holds an MEd-HRD from Colorado State University and an SHRM-SCP certification. Her hobbies include reading and fiber art.



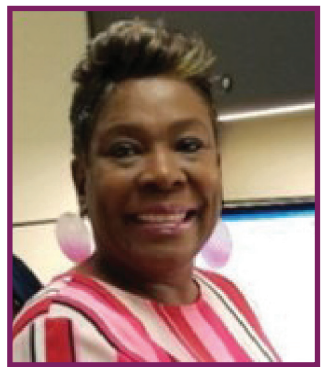
## Leneequa Morris, Sr. Benefits Manager



Leneequa stepped into her Benefits Manager assignment with Human Resources Administration on May 1, 2018. She has been a State of Georgia employee for 22 years, and before joining HRA, she held the role of Benefits Manager at the Department of Community Health State Health Benefit Plan. Leneequa loves assisting and educating employees about their flexible benefits. When not at work, Leneequa loves relaxing at home, and watching movies on many of the streaming services.

## Barbara Heard, Benefits Analyst

Following retirement, Barbara rejoined DOAS as a part-time Benefits Analyst in July 2018. She began her career over 32 years ago with the Secretary of State's office, serving in various HR professional positions. In 2012, Barbara joined HRA as the Flexible Benefits Education and Marketing Manager, resolving employee, retiree, and employer issues. Barbara enthusiastically works with people, and her professional motto is, "Remember that the person in front of you is a human who requires resources." In her spare time, Barbara enjoys spending time with family, working at her church, traveling, and shopping. She loves collecting angels and has been tagged as "Paparazzi" due to her love for snapping photographs.



## Monica Laws-Smith, Benefits Specialist



Monica has over 20 years of client service and support experience. In December 2019, she joined the HRA Flexible Benefits team as a Benefits Specialist 2. Before joining HRA, Monica was a Contact Center Team Lead and Senior Analyst providing subject matter expert support to HRA team members, state agencies, and employees on various applications, procedures, and system-related issues. Monica is a Louisiana native and one of the New Orleans Saints' biggest fans; she also enjoys cooking gumbo for friends and family, eating crawfish, and spending time with her kids! Monica lives by the motto, "Keep Going and Never Give Up!"

## Son Truong, Benefits Specialist

Son joined the HRA team in 2017 as a Benefits Specialist. Son's previous HR experience includes Recruiter, HR Generalist, HR Business Partner, and ER Specialist. Son says one of the highlights of the Flexible Benefits team's year is Open Enrollment and that he's diligent about being prepared and positioned to meet the needs of the State of Georgia employee population. What excites him about HRA is the leadership team's focused direction on improving HRA operations and the support provided to the broader HR community. Son is a certified scuba diver, and his favorite meals include seafood and a variety of Southern-fried foods. He's also a lover of animals (except snakes).



## Marcie Akins, Benefits Specialist



Marcie Akins joined the HRA team on September 1, 2022, as a Benefits Specialist 2. Marcie's previous experience prior to joining HRA includes working as an HR Generalist, Human Resources Clerk, & Payroll Manager. Marcie has 9 years of HR experience and has also worked in the medical field, performing a variety of duties for 18 years. Marcie loves spending time with her son, her two dogs, going out to dinner with friends, going to the beach, and watching movies, especially Lifetime. Marcie's favorite quote is, "Work hard, stay positive, and make it happen."

# Coming Soon!

## Upcoming Events

### Upcoming HR Community Meetings

● November 7, 2023

### Upcoming Employee Benefit Plan Council & State Personnel Board Meetings

● November 14, 2023

## Contact Us

Interested in learning more about the Flexible Benefits Program?

Contact:

**Carla Gracen**, Director of Compensation and Benefits  
[Carla.Gracen@doas.ga.gov](mailto:Carla.Gracen@doas.ga.gov)

or

**Leneequa Morris**, Sr. Benefits Manager  
[Leneequa.Morris@doas.ga.gov](mailto:Leneequa.Morris@doas.ga.gov)

We look forward to providing you with information about the Flexible Benefits Program.

### HRA General Contact Information

<http://team.ga.gov/my-benefits/>  
<http://doas.ga.gov/human-resources-administration>  
[hra.flexbenefits@doas.ga.gov](mailto:hra.flexbenefits@doas.ga.gov)

## This Issue's Contributing Writers

Benalytics  
Carla Gracen  
Leneequa Morris  
John Uhas (Benalytics)

## Newsletter Editing Team

Jacob Segura & Valerie Wilkinson

If you are interested in being added to the Benefits Advantage and/or the Horizons Newsletter mailing list, please email [newsletter.hra@doas.ga.gov](mailto:newsletter.hra@doas.ga.gov) with your request.