



Power Move #22 Open Enrollment: Know Your Coverage, Keep Your Cash!



Free Virtual Coaching

30-minutes w/ Mr. Norman

Open enrollment season can feel like a maze of pushy sales pitches, confusing brochures, and fear-based marketing. Insurance should act as a reliable shock absorber for your life, but you should never pay for protection you already have. **Power Move #22** is here to help you navigate open enrollment with confidence.

Protect Yourself and Your Family

Assess: What You Already Have Before a salesperson convinces you to buy a new product, let's take inventory of some of the [benefits](#) the State of North Carolina already provides.

- **State Health Plan (SHP):** Access to the heavily subsidized [State Health Plan](#) (Standard PPO, Plus PPO, or [HDHP](#)), which includes vital coverage like mental health and preventive care. A 2026 Update: The state rolled out a new "Preferred Provider" tier system; if you choose in-network providers, you will see significantly lower out-of-pocket costs and deductibles.
- **Retirement (TSERS):** State employees automatically enrolled in this defined benefit pension plan, contributing 6% of pre-tax salary. This replaces a maximum of 54.6% of your AFC (average of your highest four consecutive years of earnings). Access to supplemental 401(k) and 457(b) plans also provided, along with your district's 403(b) plan.
- **Death Benefit:** Once you have made at least one year of contributions to the state retirement system, you automatically qualify for a completely **free** death benefit. If you pass away while in active service, your designated beneficiary will receive a single lump-sum payment: a minimum payment of \$25,000 up to maximum of \$50,000.
- **Disability Insurance:** If you participate in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS), you are provided with basic short-term disability (STD) and long-term disability (LTD) coverage at no cost through the Disability Income Plan of North Carolina (DIP-NC). Evaluate existing employer coverage carefully before purchasing additional disability policies to avoid unnecessary coverages and expenses..

Power Move #22: Master Your Open Enrollment

Know Your Coverage, Keep Your Cash



ASSESS: Your Pre-Paid Protection



Health and Family Leave Baseline
Access the State Health Plan's new "Preferred Provider" tiers for lower out-of-pocket costs.



Automatic Death & Disability Coverage
Qualified employees receive a free \$25k-\$50k death benefit and free STD/LTD coverage.



State-Provided Disability (DIP-NC) Overview	
STD:	50% of salary (60-day wait / \$3,000 max mn.)
LTD:	65% of salary (Starts after STD ends)



Paid Parental Leave
Mother and Father eligible for 12 weeks of paid leave!
No sick leave or annual leave required!



ADDRESS: Filling Gaps & Cutting Waste



Use Pre-tax dollars to pay for Health Care and Child Care.
Sign up for the HC FSA and DC FSA.



Decline "Whole Life" & Redundant Plans
Avoid "Whole Life" and redundant supplemental disability; redirect those premiums to your investments.



AUDIT: Steps



Update your beneficiaries and dependents to reflect recent life events like marriage or birth.

- **Paid Parental Leave**: The state now provides up to **12 weeks of paid parental leave** at 100% of regular pay for **BOTH mother and father!** Expanded Qualifying Events: childbirth, adoption, foster care placement, or a miscarriage or stillbirth that occurs after the 12th completed week of pregnancy. It also fully covers situations where a child passes away after birth. There are no costs associated with this benefit, and **this leave does not deduct from your accrued sick leave or annual leave!**
- **Lantern Surgical Benefit**: Covers over **1,500 planned, non-emergency surgeries** across categories like spine, orthopedic, joint, cardiac, gynecology, general surgery, and bariatrics. Lantern covers travel expenses over 100 miles (reimbursements for mileage, pre-booked 3-star hotels, airfare for 200+ miles, and a \$35 daily meal allowance for you and a companion). There are **no premiums, no deductibles, and no copays (\$0)** for the surgery for members who use a Lantern provider.

Address: What You Might Need Now that you know your baseline, here is what you actually *might* need to purchase to fill the gaps, keeping your long-term security in mind:

- **FSA (Flexible Spending Account)** A flexible spending account (FSA) is an employer-sponsored health benefit. You can use an FSA to pay for IRS-approved medical expenses for yourself, your spouse, and qualifying dependents with tax-free dollars. In 2026, the most you can put into a health FSA is \$3,400. If you don't use all the money in your FSA by the end of the year, you may end up losing some or all of those funds.
- **DCFSA (Dependent Care FSA)** a pre-tax benefit account used to pay for eligible dependent care services, such as preschool, summer day camp, before or after school programs, and child or adult daycare. Utilizing an FSA of either type can help reduce overall taxable income by lowering your AGI.
- **Term Life Insurance** (The Death Benefit): Because your benefit is capped at \$50,000, this is rarely enough to fully protect a growing family. IF you have dependents, purchasing a 10-, 20- or 30-year "[Term Life](#)" policy meets this need, securing a much larger death benefit for relatively little money at a **fixed** (level-term) **rate** for the life of the policy. Consider comparing open market term life options with your employer's supplemental group life offerings to evaluate cost and portability.

Audit: Check Your Blind Spots Annually

- **Update** your dependents and beneficiaries. Divorce, new child, adoption, and other life events are best addressed sooner rather than later. Be sure your assets are directed as you intend them to be.
- **Evaluate** whether whole life or supplemental plans offered during Open Enrollment align with your overall financial goals before purchasing or renewing premiums. Consider saving and investing any resultant savings of those premium dollars toward leveling up your financial fitness..

STANDARD PPO & PLUS PPO PLAN for Active Subscribers



Monthly Premium Rates January 1, 2027 to December 31, 2027	STANDARD PPO Plan				PLUS PPO Plan			
	Salary Band				Salary Band			
	\$50,000 + UNDER	\$50,001 - \$65,000	\$65,001 - \$90,000	\$90,001 + OVER	\$50,000 + UNDER	\$50,001 - \$65,000	\$65,001 - \$90,000	\$90,001 + OVER
ACTIVE SUBSCRIBERS								
Subscriber Only	\$36.76	\$52.52	\$68.28	\$84.00	\$69.32	\$98.72	\$128.12	\$168.04
Subscriber + Child(ren)	\$194.28	\$210.04	\$225.80	\$241.52	\$289.84	\$319.24	\$348.64	\$388.56
Subscriber + Spouse	\$603.76	\$619.52	\$635.28	\$651.00	\$783.32	\$812.72	\$842.12	\$882.04
Subscriber + Family	\$603.76	\$619.52	\$635.28	\$651.00	\$783.32	\$812.72	\$842.12	\$882.04

This material is for educational and informational purposes only and is intended to provide a general overview of typical employee benefits, open enrollment options, and cash flow strategies. This information is not comprehensive, and actual benefit details, premium structures, and tax impacts will vary based on employer, state plan revisions, and personal circumstances. This document does not constitute an offer to sell, a solicitation of an offer to buy, or a recommendation for any specific security, insurance product, or investment strategy. You should consult with your own qualified CPA, tax professional, or financial advisor regarding your specific situation. PlanScope360 and Take10™ are not affiliated with or endorsed by the State of North Carolina, the North Carolina State Health Plan, or any government agency. 5859747-0826