

# **Identity Theft Protection: A Powerful Voluntary Benefit**

*With the rise of online banking and digital transactions, identity fraud has increased. Peter Marcia, CEO of YouDecide, a voluntary benefits outsourcing firm, discusses why employers should offer identity theft protection insurance to their employees as an additional benefit.*

We live in a world of digital wallets, online banking, e-commerce, and multiple social media platforms. This hyper-automated lifestyle is causing individuals to be more vulnerable to fraud than ever.

How can you help your employees protect their finances, reputation, and identity? Providing a voluntary benefits package—one that includes identity theft protection—should be an integral part of this strategy. Identity theft protection is a voluntary benefit that appeals to employees of all ages and economic statuses and can provide peace of mind should they experience a data breach.

## **What is identity theft protection?**

At a high level, an identity theft protection program can help safeguard your employees' digital reputation and finances through ongoing monitoring and restoration in the event of a breach. Ongoing monitoring can involve reviewing Equifax, Experian and Transunion report. Public records, new accounts (bank utility, etc.) and activity on the dark web are observed as well. Identity theft protection companies send alerts to its customers if there is questionable activity. If an unfortunate identity theft occurs, these companies have dedicated advocates who will perform all of the time-consuming activities associated with restoring one's identity. Many identity theft protection programs offer the additional benefit of monitoring covered children's social media accounts to protect against cyberbullying, sexual predators and any other threats.

## **Why should I offer identity theft protection as a benefit?**

Let's face it; it seems like every other week we are hearing about another data breach. In fact, in 2017 alone, 16.7 million people were victims of identity fraud. And the fraudsters are only getting more sophisticated.<sup>1</sup> Employees expect their employer to assist them in supporting their financial wellness and one way is to provide identity theft protection. Attributes of identity theft protection plans are:

- **Evergreen Product** – Employees can enroll anytime throughout the year. This product can be communicated all year round and can be highlighted in tax season when identity theft is top of mind!
- **Enrollment** – Effectively communicating how this product aligns with overall financial wellness coupled with a simple enrollment method allows employees to participate seamlessly.
- **Rates** – The rates for an identity theft protection program are generally inexpensive and when offered through an employer, even more competitive. Why not help your employees save money!
- **Payroll Deduction** – This program can also be payroll deducted, making it easier to participate.
- **Portability** – Coverage can continue after termination of employment. The price may change depending on carrier.

With a shrinking workforce, employers need to differentiate themselves when attracting new talent. One way to do this is to include identity theft protection so that employees will feel protected. While many employees may have a scaled down, “free” version of identity theft protection after being part of the breach, they often don’t include important components like social media monitoring and restoration of identity. Some employers

taking identity theft protection to the next level by providing an employer-paid protection program to employees.

Identity theft protection is a voluntary benefit worth considering. It contributes to an effective workplace by allowing employees to focus on their productivity rather than the fears of what could occur if their identity is compromised.

By Peter Marica