

How to Evaluate International Student Health Insurance Options

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Introduction

At LewerMark, we know your school's task of evaluating health insurance options for students continues to grow more complex. Insurance laws in our country are changing rapidly. These dilemmas can be even more complex for international students studying in the U.S.

We want to help make it easier for you and your colleagues involved in this decision. That's why we've sorted through the clutter and identified the key issues that impact schools (They're issues that affect how you select a plan for international students).

In this guide, you'll learn about two key considerations to look at when examining your provider and plan options. And you'll have a chance to complete a short evaluation of your existing insurance plan to see if it indeed meets the needs of your school and students.

If at any point while reading this guide you have questions about LewerMark or the plans and services we provide, reach out directly to:

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We hope this guide provides clarity in your evaluation process.

We've sorted through the clutter and identified the key issues that impact schools.

The Importance of Mandating Insurance

When a school is evaluating health insurance options for its students, one of the most important considerations is whether that plan should be mandated.

Mandating a group health insurance plan for international students acts as a form of risk mitigation - for all parties involved. It serves as protection, legally and financially. And it can help schools in new student recruitment because they can be more transparent and accurate in estimating costs for students.

Requiring insurance through a group plan has a number of advantages for both institution and student:

- Blanket policies protect the school against students falling through the cracks and winding up uninsured.
- The U.S. healthcare system can be difficult even for lifelong residents to navigate. A plan provided by the school removes the issues associated with students shopping for insurance in a marketplace that they may not understand.
- A school-sponsored plan ensures that every individual has the proper insurance and the documentation needed.
- The student is protected from unexpected out-of-pocket medical expenses. When accidents, illnesses or other medical issues occur, they know that they will not be caught with an unexpected and sometimes significant bill.
- Local medical providers are protected from medical bills that your students cannot pay. This allows hospitals to run more efficiently and provide better care to everyone in your community.

The Importance of a Separate Plan for International Students

When schools are evaluating plans and providers, it's also important to examine who is covered. The insurance needs of international students vary from those of domestic students, so plans should reflect that. In addition to necessary plan components, there is a financial factor that schools must consider when deciding whether to offer combined or separate plans.

Separating plans is a smart move for a variety of reasons, including:

- International students have a number of special considerations that do not apply to domestic students. These considerations include emergency evacuation and repatriation services.
- International citizens who are on a student visa currently receive a 5-year exemption from the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Individual Mandate. Because of this exemption, schools can take advantage of plan designs that serve the unique needs of international students and avoid the unnecessary complications that come with meeting the requirements for insurance for U.S. citizens.
- By limiting the pool to international citizens on student visas, LowerMark can create a participant pool with a consistent risk profile. This pool typically has lower claims utilization, which means that we can offer rates that are more stable and predictable. In the coming years, ACA-compliant plans' rates may increase from 20% to 50% as insurance companies adjust for unlimited benefits.

The Importance of a Separate Plan for International Students *(continued)*

International students have a different set of needs than domestic students. Beyond just plan-related needs. The student advisor is usually the party who must help international students navigate those unique differences and the challenges they present. When educational institutions enlist an international student health insurance program manager adept in these areas, they can relieve the burdens placed on international student advisors.

These burdens include:

- Working with students and families, and helping them use the U.S. healthcare system effectively.
- Communicating complex insurance terms in students' first language.
- Educating the student on how to use his or her insurance benefits.
- Coordinating medical evacuation, repatriation services and other medical needs.

Evaluating Plans and Providers

Regardless of the size of your institution, comparing and evaluating available plans can be complicated and confusing. When a school goes through an insurance plan search and evaluation, there are a number of departments and decision makers involved.

We invite you to review the following statements below on behalf of your department. Feel free to invite colleagues in other departments to review the statements as well.

How many of these statements apply to you?

yes **no**

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>I am confident our plan design is suitable for international students.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>I believe our current rate fairly represents the overall benefits of the plan.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>I'm confident in the stability of our current plan rates.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Our plan design eliminates out-of-pocket surprises for our students and their families.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>We are currently getting the support and updates related to our plan coverage, claims support and on-site visits we expect from our insurance representative.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>When I have an issue, I have a direct line where I can speak with a real person about my concerns.</i> |

If you agreed with most or all of those statements, you have done an excellent job selecting a plan. However, if it has been a while since the last time you compared plans and providers, you may not have the most competitive rates.

If fewer than half of those statements apply to you and your school, you have an opportunity this semester to evaluate your coverage and pick a plan that better suits you and your students' needs.

About LewerMark

For 25 years, LewerMark has tailored programs to fit the insurance needs of international students and the institutions where they study. Our experience in international student insurance allows us to offer a range of plans that are easy to use and to understand.

With insurance in place, students can minimize their risk of surprise out-of-pocket expenses that can devastate a budget. Our programs allow them to budget for the known and avoid the shock of unknown perils.

We have the industry's only in-house, integrated solution for enrollments, processing, claims and student services.

Our clients can expect:

- dedicated customer services from multilingual account managers.
- prompt, consistent and accurate claims processing from our internal claim administrators.
- customized enrollment dates that fit their school requirements.

To find out how we can best serve the needs of your international students and your university contact us today. Or visit **LewerMark.com**.

We are waiting to provide your organization with a program that fits your international students' needs.

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*Interested in learning more about
LewerMark's plans and coverage?*

Visit lewermark.com/quote to find out if your school qualifies.



LewerMark
Student Insurance