



ALASKA SHRM STATE COUNCIL



# *Voluntary Benefits and Enrollment Best Practices in the New COVID World*

*Presented by Pamela Whitfield*

Program Handouts: <http://alaska.shrm.org/slides>

➤ Bookmark our page <http://alaska.shrm.org>

➤ Follow us on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/AKSHRMStateCouncil>



**VIRTUAL ALASKA STATE HR CONFERENCE**  
SEPTEMBER 24, 2020; 9:00AM – 3:00PM  
REGISTRATION IS OPEN **NOW!**

<https://alaska.shrm.org/virtual-ak-state-conference-fall-2020>

The background of the slide is a dark red color with a microscopic view of cells and viruses. On the left side, there are several large, irregularly shaped cells with visible internal structures. In the center and right, there are several spherical, textured particles that resemble viruses or bacteria. The overall aesthetic is scientific and modern.

# Voluntary Benefits and Enrollment Best Practices in the new Covid World

Pamela A. Whitfield  
Elite-VB LLC

01.

## Impact of Covid at Workplace

Covid Stats on impact on employee wellness, stress and **financial concerns at workplace**

03.

## Communication & Enrollment Best Practices

Benefits communication and enrollment tools for the virtual workplace

02.


## VB Benefits – Past, Present and “Covid”

The history of Voluntary, plans “Covid friendly” as well as non-traditional benefits

04.

## Real World Scenarios

Conclusion: three case studies to apply new tools/benefits NOW for the new Covid world



“We cannot say this loudly enough or clearly enough or often enough: All countries can still change the course of this pandemic”

—DR. TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S DIRECTOR GENERAL - Feb 2020

The background of the slide features a dark red gradient. On the left side, there is a detailed, semi-transparent illustration of a cluster of cells, showing their internal structures like nuclei and membranes. In the upper right quadrant, there is a single, glowing red spherical virus particle with a textured surface. The title 'COVID-19' is positioned in the upper right area, with a white L-shaped graphic element to its right.

# COVID-19

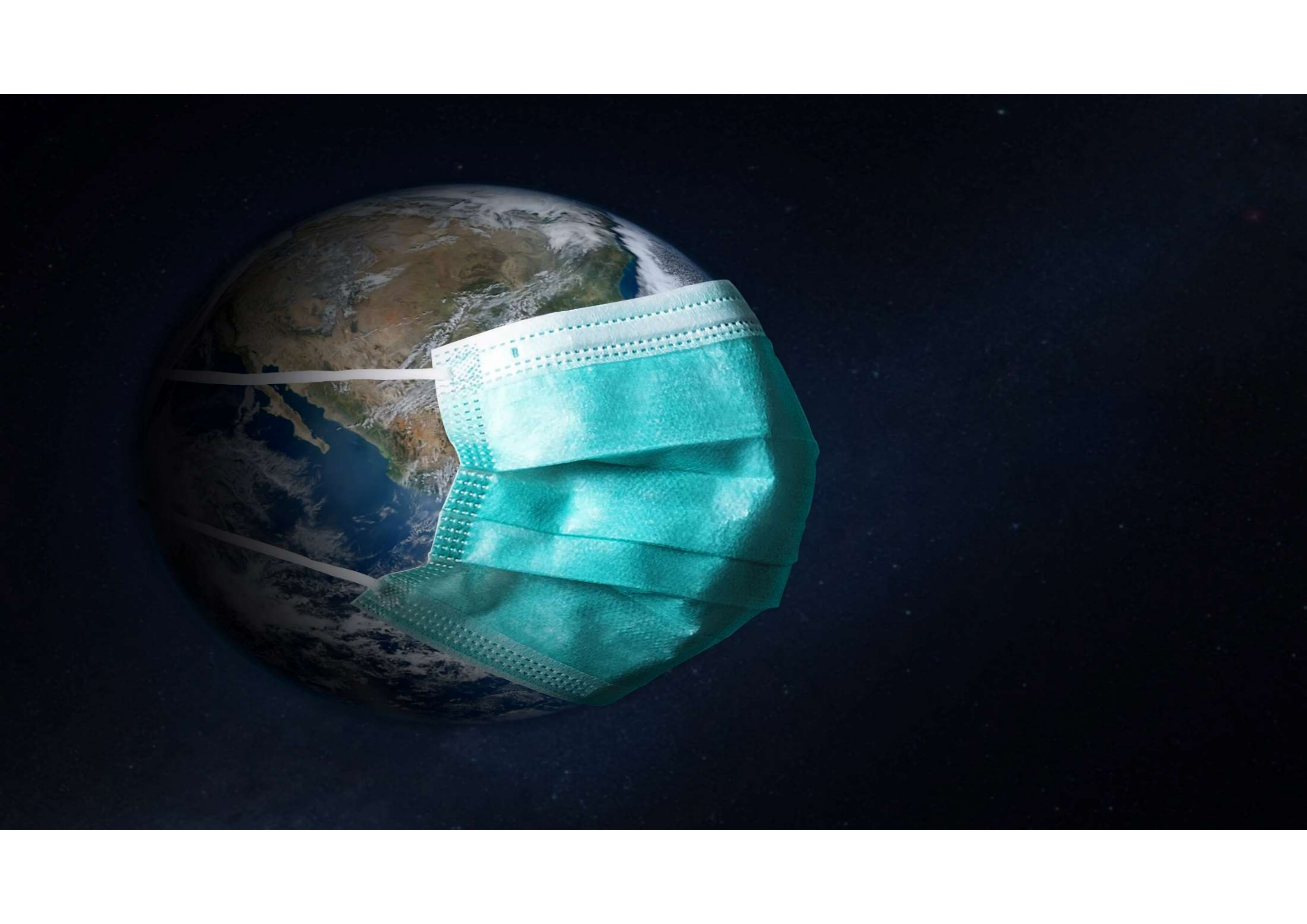
COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the recently found virus known as SARS-CoV-2 (or coronavirus). Before the outbreak originated in Wuhan, China on December 2019, there was no information about this virus

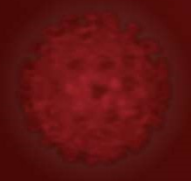
# HISTORY

The oldest common ancestor of coronavirus has been dated as far back as the 9th century BC. Some studies published in 1990 specified the most recent common ancestors as follows:

- Betacoronavirus: 3300 BC
- Deltacoronavirus: 3000 BC
- Gammacoronavirus: 2800 BC
- Alphacoronavirus: 2400 BC

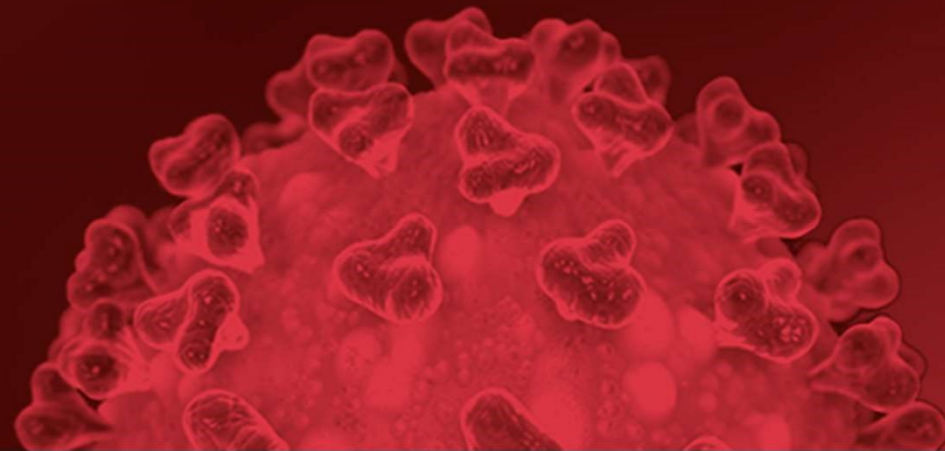






24,824,687+

Reported cases Globally as of Aug 24<sup>th</sup>







# 902,580


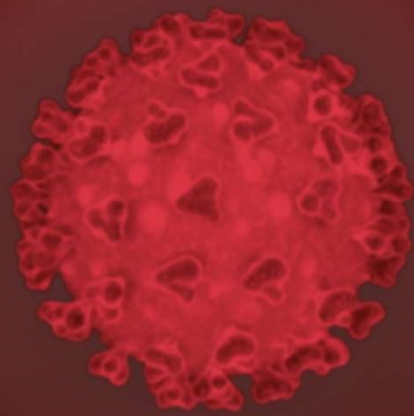
Reported deaths of COVID-19 in the World

# 182,228

Deaths in the US of as of today

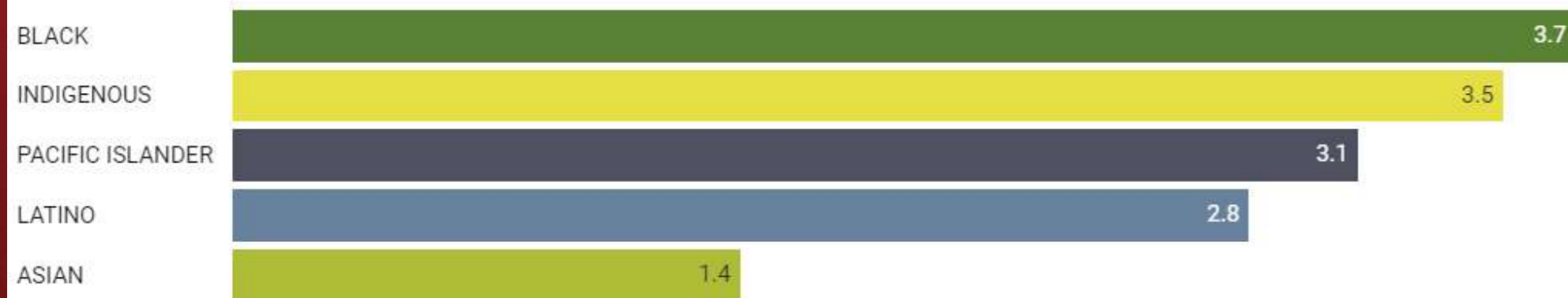
with over **5,793,009 confirmed cases**

**Alaska: Over 5,793 cases and 37 deaths**



## Adjusted for age, other racial groups are this many times more likely to have died of COVID-19 than White Americans

Reflects mortality rates calculated through Aug. 4.



Indirect age-adjustment has been used.

Source: [APM Research Lab](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

### RACE DISPARITY AMONG THOSE AFFECTED BY COVID:

- Black and Latino people are **THREE TIMES** as likely to become infected and **TWICE** as likely to die
- However, nationwide, **Alaska Natives and American Indians are dying at a higher rate except blacks** and
- 25% of Alaskan cases are Alaska Natives, who make up just 16% of our population

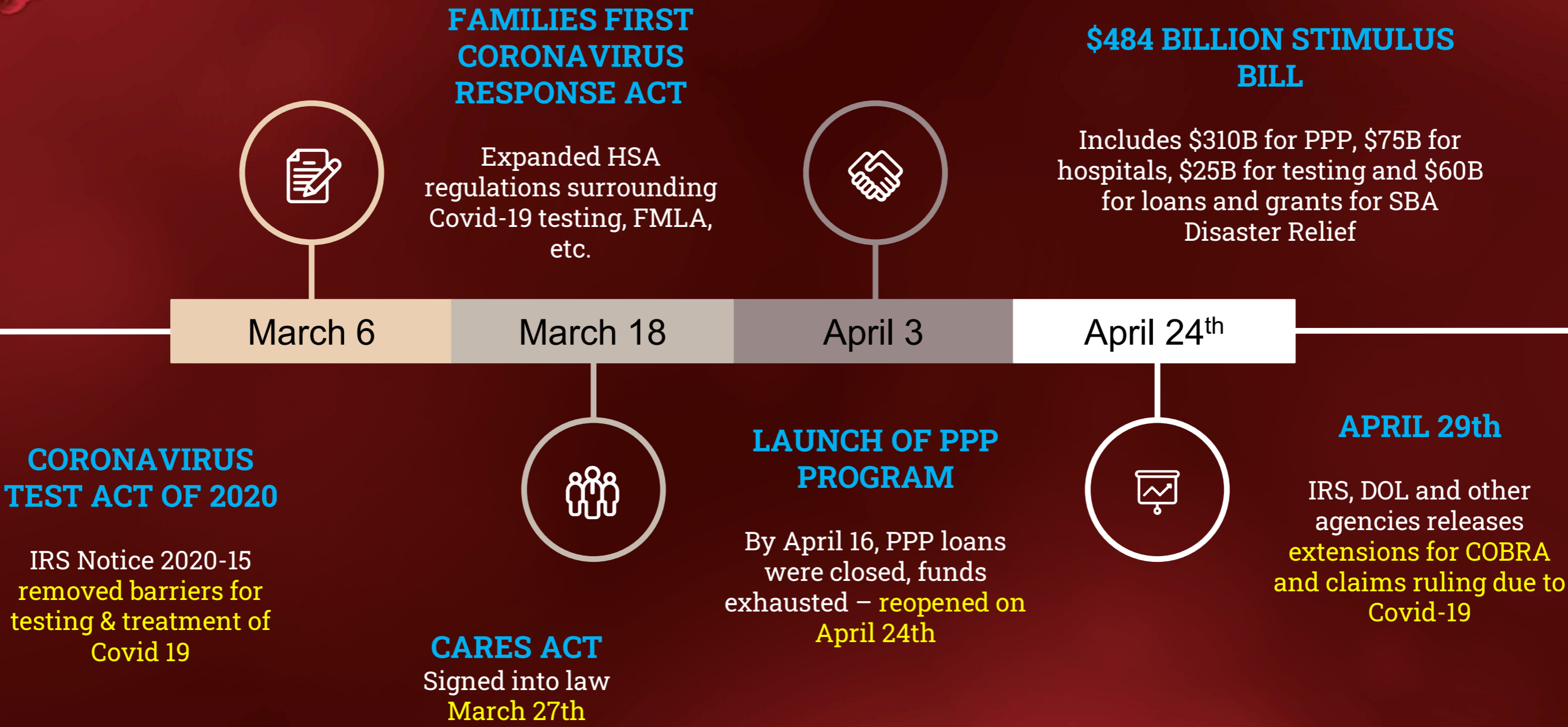
A microscopic view of cells and a virus particle. The cells are shown in various stages of division and are stained in shades of red and orange. A single, spherical virus particle with a textured surface is visible in the lower center. The background is a dark, reddish-brown color.

01.

# Impact of Covid at the Workplace

Starting with a review of the laws...

# HISTORY OF SIGNIFICANT COVID LAWS



# BEFORE COVID – EMPLOYEES IN A “FRAGILE STATE”

## HOME FORECLOSURES

46% of all home foreclosures are due to a **DISABILITY** (not losing job) due to getting sick or having an injury

## HEART DISEASE

More women die of heart disease than ALL cancers combined with Stroke the leading cause of disability

## DISABILITY

35% of American's will experience a disability lasting more than 90 days and **most people live paycheck-to-paycheck**

## SERIOUS ILLNESS

37% of American's who had a serious illness used up **most of their savings** (AND they had good medical coverage)

## CANCER

The risk is still **one in two for men and one in three for women** with 67% “out of pocket” with extra expenses in Alaska

## LIFE INSURANCE

58% of American's have inadequate life insurance. Covid is a new deadly virus without a vaccine – **EVERYONE NEEDS LIFE INSURANCE NOW**

## Returning workforce: CEO's confidence in...

YOUR ABILITY TO DO THE FOLLOWING	VERY CONFIDENT	MODERATELY CONFIDENT
MEET CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS	75%	22%
PROVIDE A SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENT	70%	28%
RETAIN CRITICAL TALENT	61%	34%
MANAGE EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND MORALE	51%	46%
BUILD SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE	48%	45%
BALANCE NEEDS OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS	46%	48%

## CFO's - Planning implementation once back to on-site work

CHANGE WORKPLACE SAFETY: WEARING MASKS, TESTING, ETC.	76%
RECONFIGURE WORK SITES TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL DISTANCING	65%
CHANGE SHIFTS OR ALTERNATIVE CREWS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE	52%
MAKE REMOTE WORK A PERMANENT OPTION FOR ROLES THAT ALLOW IT	49%
ACCELERATE AUTOMATION AND NEW WAYS OF WORKING	23%
EVALUTE NEW TOOLS TO SUPPORT WORKFORCE TRACKING AND CONTACT TRACING	23%
OFFER TARGETED BENEFITS FOR ON-SITE WORKERS IN AFFECTED AREAS	8%

# LARGE COMPANIES Survey - their changes due to Covid

PAYING FOR TELEMEDICINE SCREENING WITH NO COST SHARING	100%
OFFERING ON-SITE CLINICS	67%
WAIVING COST-SHARING FOR COVID MEDICAL TREATMENT	45%
HIGH DEDUCTIBLES PLANS WAIVING COSTS	32%
TREATMENT VIA TELEMEDICINE COVERED IN FULL	80%
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES VISITS VIA TELEMEDICINE	61%
PRESCRIPTION DRUGS PLANS ALTERED TO PROVIDE ACCESS	72%
TOP CONCERNS RE: PANDEMIC IMPACT: EMPLOYEES FALLING ILL	81%



# Covid - American's are confused about healthcare costs

50% of American's get healthcare through ER - but 38 MILLION are out of work

68% of Americans believe Covid will make their healthcare MORE EXPENSIVE

38% of Americans are confused as to what is and is NOT covered in healthcare

Only 5% of American's know that the CARES ACT does NOT for Covid-19 treatment

59% of Valuepenguin study INCORRECTLY said the law included medical treatment

And 36% had NO IDEA what the CARES act covers

And 72% of Americans believe health insurance should be mandatory for everyone

# EMPLOYEES GIVE EMPLOYERS "THUMBS UP" ...however

## ANXIOUS



However, 51% said they were **"very anxious"** about work status

## PRECAUTIONS AT WORK



74% felt their employers took precautions at work to **ensure safety**

Wellbeing

Anxiousness

Work Environment

Work & Future

## CARED ABOUT WELLBEING

April survey - employee survey found 67% of workers felt that their employers genuinely cared about **well-being**



## FOREVER CHANGED?

70% of employees say they expect their work environment to be **forever changed**



## THE FUTURE?

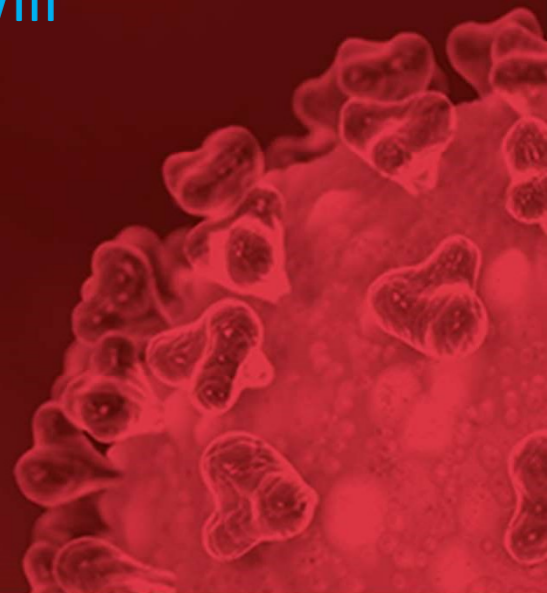
Workers are split on the optimism about recovery with 41% saying the economy would bounce back and **39% not sure**

# Gallup – 3 Strategies on Leadership

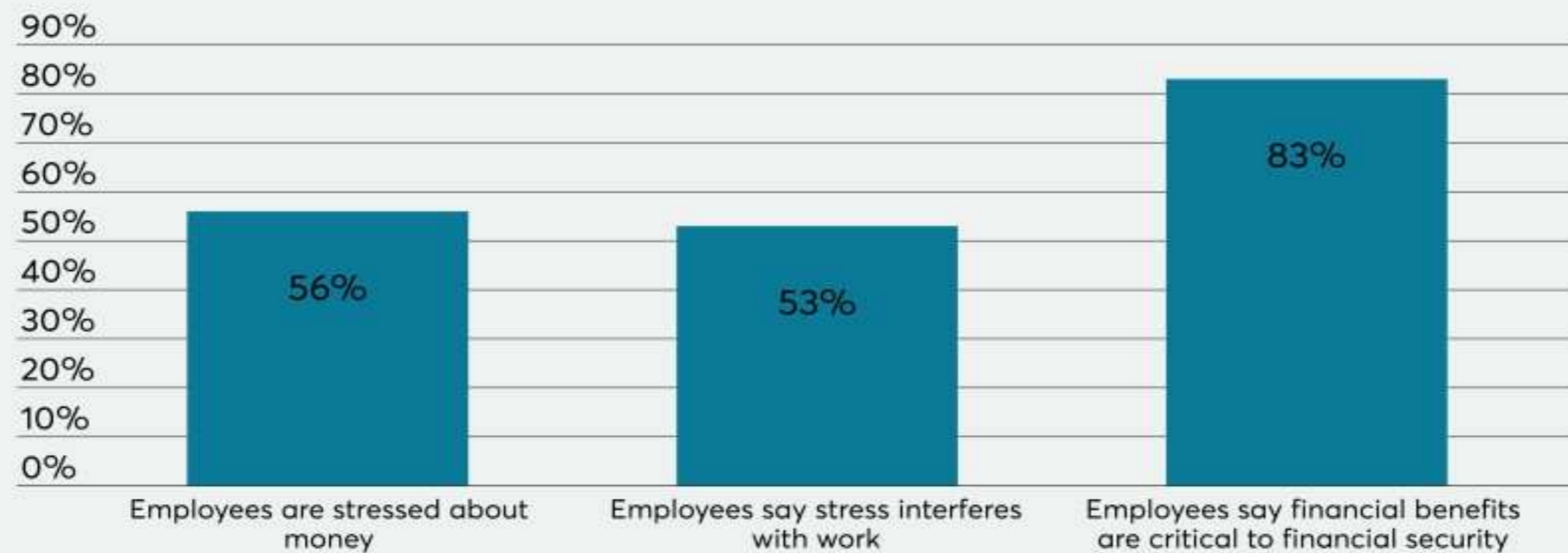
- April 16<sup>th</sup> Gallup poll:
  - Build Trust and show Compassion
  - Managers should be on the frontlines
  - Share OPTIMISM and HOPE
  - Focus on employees WELLBEING amid DISRUPTION
- Lead with PURPOSE: Trust, Stability, Compassion and Hope

Priority: 52% of employees said they are likely or somewhat that Covid-19 will cause major struggles with

72% worried about contracting Covid



## Financial wellness benefits can impact employees' lives



Source: Bank of America

Financial stress is an ever-present reality even when we're not facing down a global pandemic, but right now that reality is magnified, **employees have immediate financial needs they are struggling to meet.**

They need options that don't involve escalating debt or borrowing from their retirement future. **Voluntary benefits are a way employers can help.**

# WITH COVID – AMERICAN'S CAN'T HANDLE ANY MORE “FINANCIAL SURPRISES”

## MEDICAL COSTS

52% of American's do NOT have enough money saved to cover Covid-19 medical costs (some swab tests are as high as \$1500)

## HOSPITAL COSTS

Average Covid hospitalization costs are \$73k without insurance and \$38k out of 30 Billion claims records (July 2020)

## COVID MEDS

Gilead Sciences says costs for Remdesivir will be \$2500 to \$4000 depending on insurance (shortening recovery time by 31%)

## FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY

78% of Americans said if they received a surprise medical bill, it would “significantly set back finances”

## SURPRISE BILLS

Over 13% of American's had a “surprise” medical bill OVER \$1000 in the past year and 37% pay it without question

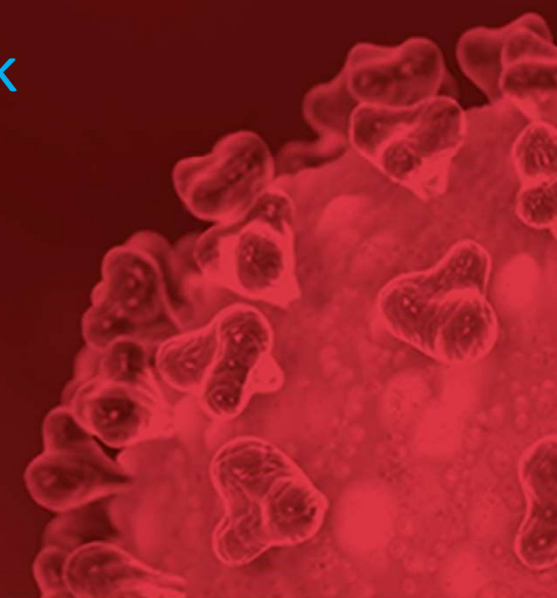
## COVID ER & TESTING

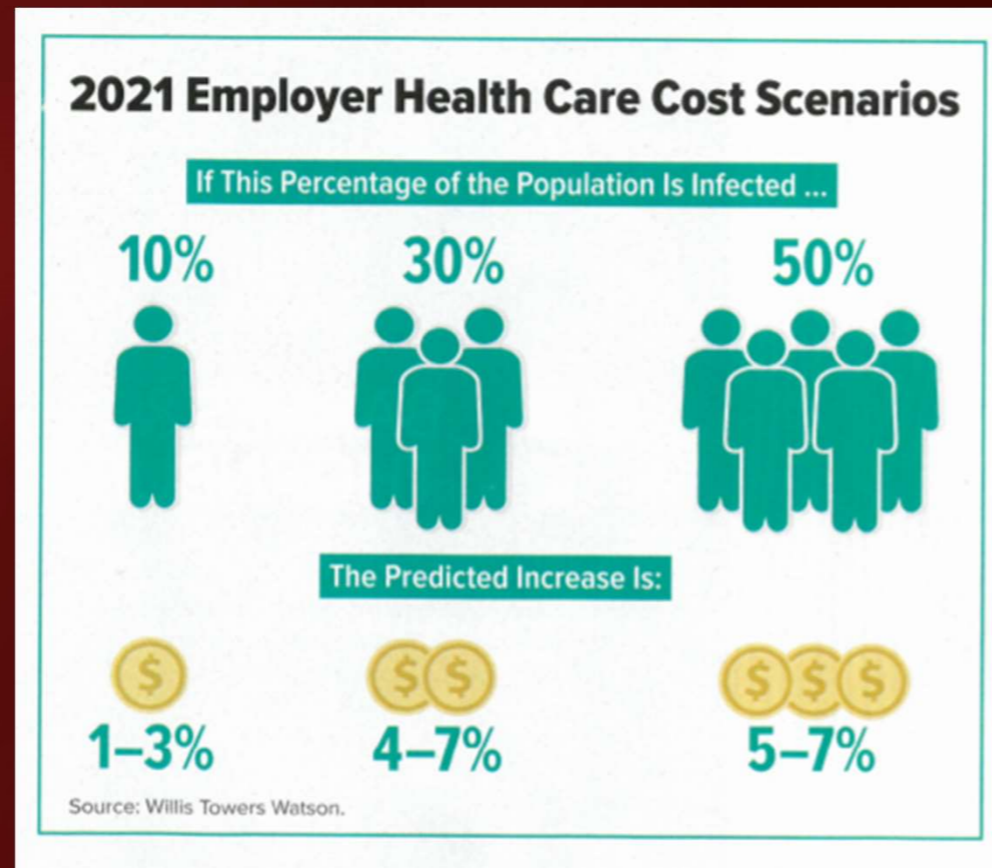
Most surprise bills are coming from ER (28%) with COVID test costs not far behind (\$4k is ER Covid costs in Miami)



Regarding **HOSPITAL COSTS** – July 21<sup>st</sup> study said **COVID treatment costs range from \$17k to MORE THAN \$93,000** – depending on a patient’s age & geography

Costs per affected person: **\$250 for mild cases, \$2500 for moderate, \$30,000 for severe cases and close to \$100k for catastrophic care** (Willis Towers Watson)





Looking forward to 2021...this is the **impact on EMPLOYER health care costs based on the percentage of the population getting Covid**

If these costs go up even 3%...who will bear the burden – **EMPLOYER or EMPLOYEE (or both)?**

**Vaccine Costs:** If you have medical (preventative), it's covered, but what about those without?

# OVERALL TRENDS - COVID-19 ACCENTUATES THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL WELLNESS

## BUILD/REBUILD SAVINGS

Two-Thirds of Americans do not have six weeks of income saved with **\$38 trillion of retirement savings** gone by April 3

## HARDSHIP ADJUSTMENTS

Provide employees with options that they can **minimize financial hardship** with cost-effective voluntary benefits

## MANAGE DEBT

For many employees, the pandemic will leave them with above-normal credit card debt as **29% expected to dip into retirement savings to make ends meet**

## TELEMEDICINE

Employers are experiencing added savings from increased productivity when using Telemed for **preventative, chronic condition and mental health**

## PROTECT AGAINST FRAUD

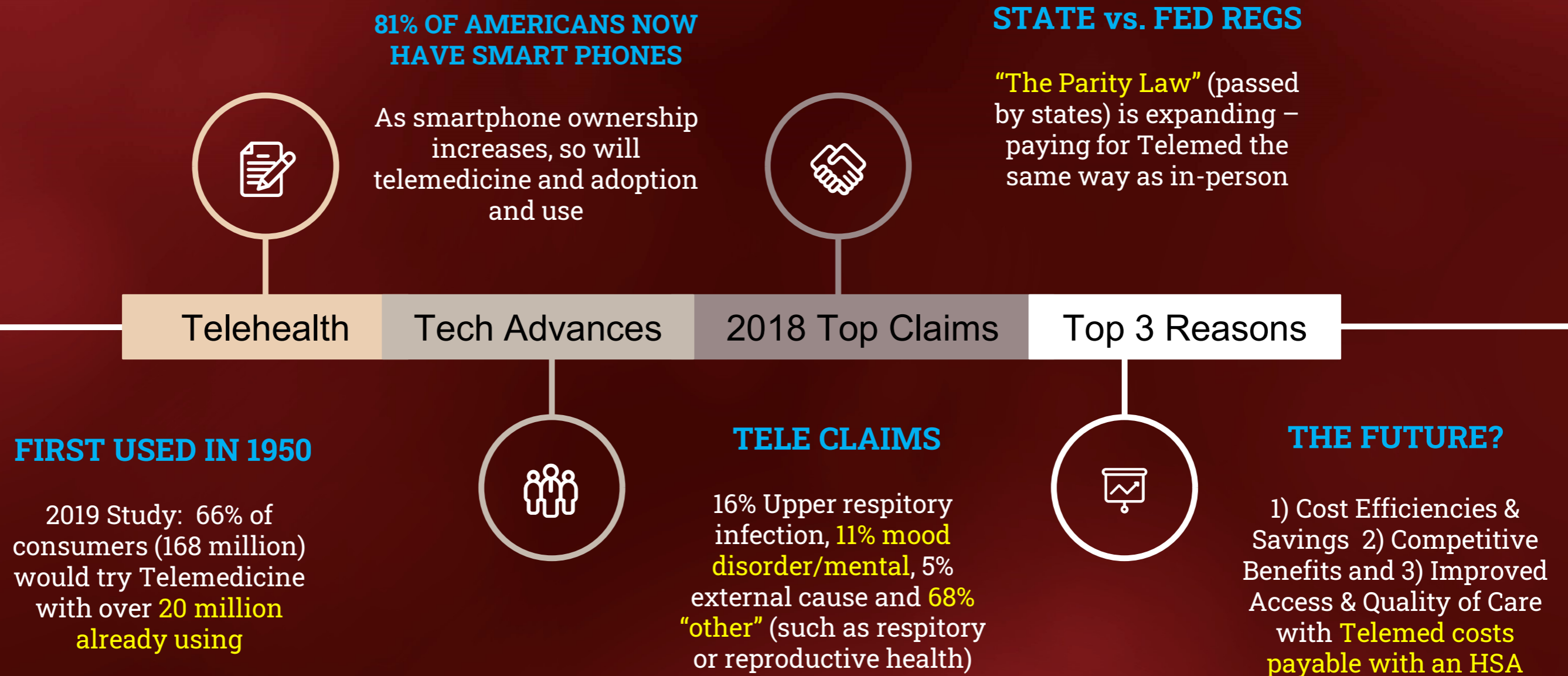
Unfortunately, unscrupulous people exploit others during a time of crisis. Educate employees on how to avoid scams and fraud (**ID Theft**)

## MEC PLANS

Low-cost plans that give organizations an affordable path to providing coverage if an employer has to drop medical coverage (**MEC Plans**)



# 2020 – THE YEAR FOR TELEMEDICINE – especially Alaska



The background of the slide is a dark red gradient. On the left side, there is a cluster of cells, possibly intestinal or epithelial, shown in a microscopic view. These cells are semi-transparent and show internal structures like nuclei. In the lower center, there is a single, larger, spherical virus particle with a textured, spiky surface, characteristic of a coronavirus. The text is overlaid on the right side of the slide.

# 02. VB Benefits – Past, Present and “Covid”

Never before has there been a **greater need..**

# History of Voluntary Benefits



## Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century

First Voluntary Products introduced from East Coast Carriers - invention of payroll-deduction of **Employee-paid plans**

## 1970's to 1980's

Development of a range of permanent life products sold at the workplace - **no "guarantee issue"**

## 1980's to 2000's

Into of laptop enrollments - face at workplace - no self-enrollments - **Group products introduced**

## 2000's to now

Greater breadth of products, HSA-compliant products, Group plans with high "GI" limits & **Voluntary Brokers appear**

# Venturing into “True Group” for larger companies

1. As the market continued to change, and spurred partially by PPACA, some carriers began to look to further evolve their products to become **true group** - **Premium was no longer reconciled at the EMPLOYEE level**
2. Movement from individual to Group to True Group means **richer (customized) plan designs, lower premiums (can be as low as 40% over individual) and higher “GI” limits** so the consumer “wins”
3. HRIS platform integrations abound with **top VB Brokers focusing on strong communication plan driving self-enrollments**

## Individual Platform

- Individual state filing
- Individual certificate
- Varying plan design
- **Inability to integrate on technology platform**



## Group Chassis Platform

- Single state filing
- Individual certificate
- **Attempted integration on technology platform**



## True Group Platform

- Start date 1/1/2013
- Single state Filing
- Group certificate
- **Simple integration on any technology platform**



**MARKET SHIFT**

# Voluntary Benefits 101

- **TYPICALLY PAID FOR BY EMPLOYEE 100%**
- **ALSO KNOW AS “PERSONAL INSURANCE PRODUCTS”** – Throw OUT the word “voluntary” – many plans are portable so benefits stay with the employee (potentially for LIFE)
- **CAN BE ADDED AT ANYTIME (AS WELL AS REPLACEMENT)** – Not only true, but the BEST enrollments that I have had over 25 years of VB, are the ones that introduce voluntary “OFF” Open Enrollment
- **PROVIDE PLANS THAT YOUR EMPLOYEES CANNOT GET WITHOUT YOU** – it’s about using the benefits to ATTRACT and RETAIN quality employees
- **HIGHER THE DEDUCTIBLE, THE GREATER THE NEED** – Obvious but true...
- **COST EFFECTIVE IS AN UNDERSTATEMENT** – Yes, do NOT say “my employees don’t have the money” – they **DO HAVE \$2 a week to spend on an accident plan...**and can’t wait to participate in plans **similarly affordable**

# Voluntary Options

- **ACCIDENT PLANS** – most popular in Alaska – **CASH** benefits for everything from travel, lodging, hospital, ER, wellness and more
- **DISABILITY** – Can offer short term (3 months) or possibly longer
- **CRITICAL ILLNESS** – Tax-Free lump sum benefit for specific illnesses
- **CANCER PLANS** – CASH benefits payable for diagnosis and treatment of cancer
- **HOSPITAL PLANS** – Provides benefits for hospitalization, outpatient surgery and more (plans design depend on HSA in place or not)
- **LIFE INSURANCE** – Can compliment employer-paid Group Term life due to portability and different programs such as Whole or Universal
- **DENTAL/VISION** – Presented when employer-paid plans are not available
- **“GAP” PLANS** – Variation on a hospital plan, these programs truly “bridge the gap” and pay for coverage that medical don’t
- **“MEC PLANS”** – Alternative to medical, pays for preventative, co-pays for office visits, discounts on prescriptions and Teledoc (less than one-quarter of medical costs – employer decides who funds)

# WHY offer Voluntary? it's a good BUSINESS DECISION

## NO COST to the EMPLOYER

The ability to maximize the benefit dollars being spent...as the benefits are paid for by the EMPLOYEES

## LOWER WORKER COMP COSTS

Offering STD & Accident plans can lower Monday morning fraudulent workers comp claims by 46% (Guardian study)

## ATTRACT & RETAIN TALENT

The RICHER the benefit package – better to attract and retain talent & the cost of turnover is expensive

## LOWER FICA TAXES

Yup – still true. For every \$10k of pre-tax (accident and hospital) premium, companies avoid \$465 in matching FICA.

## FILL “GAPS” IN BENEFIT OFFERING

When an employer cannot afford a benefit, offering EE-paid options is the next best thing...at no cost to the EMPLOYER

## AND VB WILL EVEN

LOWER absenteeism and presenteeism with your employees knowing they have a financial safety net should challenges/covid happen

# Voluntary Benefit Trends – June 2020 Benefit Pros (data collected in Feb and March of 2020)

**1** Brokers are expanding their product portfolios to align with the growing, diverse needs of employees.

Accident, critical illness, short-term disability and dental insurance are among the top five most frequently sold products by both *benefit brokers* (defined as those who sell employee benefits, usually employer-paid) and *voluntary brokers* (those who sell primarily voluntary and include enrollment companies). Term life insurance is the most frequently sold coverage for benefit brokers, while voluntary brokers favor cancer and hospital indemnity insurance in their top five.

## Top 5 voluntary products sold in 2019

Benefit brokers		Voluntary brokers
Term life	1	Accident
Accident	2	Short-term disability (tied)
Critical illness	3	Critical illness (tied)
Short-term disability	4	Hospital indemnity
Dental	5	Dental & Cancer (tied)

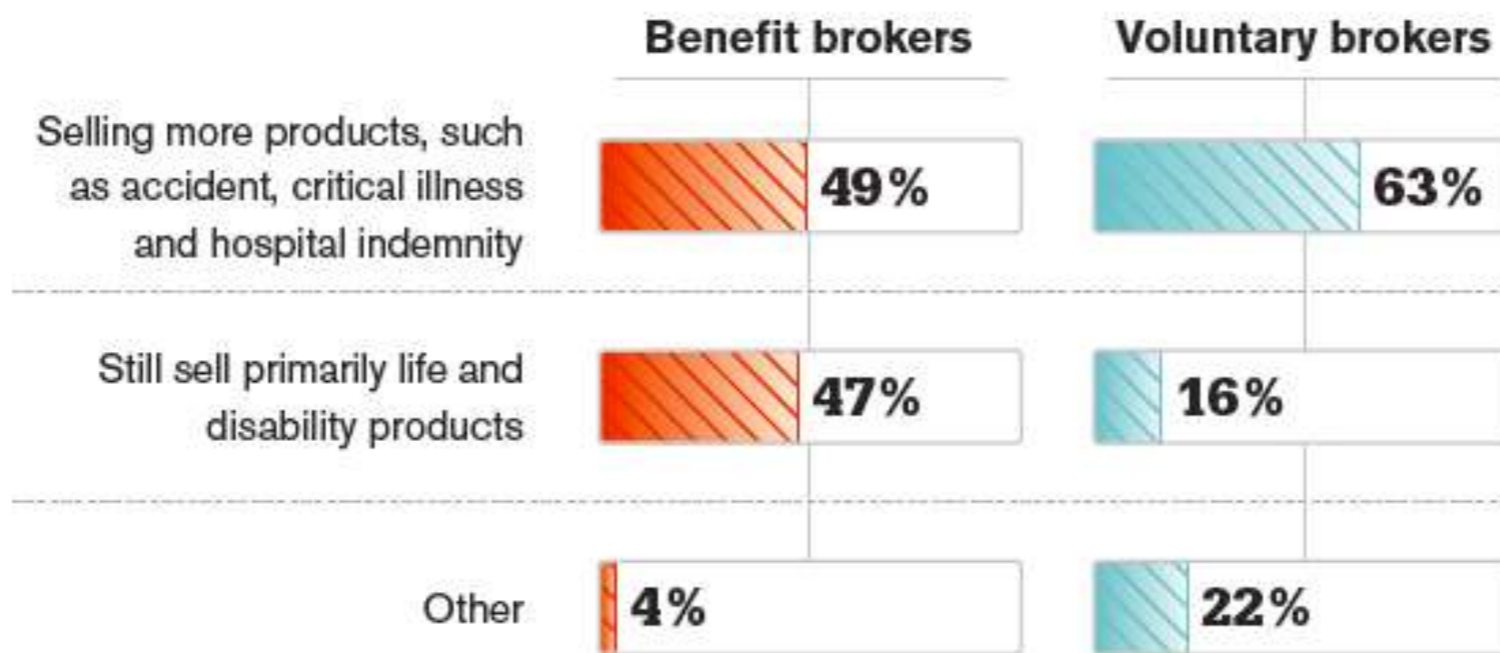
In Alaska, there is nothing more important than a \$5/week **Accident Plan**, but **Disability** and **Life** is also critical due to Covid-19



# Voluntary Benefit Trends - June 2020 Benefit Pros

**2** Most brokers are shifting their “go to” products to supplemental health insurance. Nearly two-thirds of voluntary brokers and half of benefit brokers agree their top three “go to” products are moving to more supplemental health coverages, including accident, critical illness and hospital indemnity. This change suggests brokers are aligning their product story with employers’ biggest pain point: health care benefit strategies.

## Changes in top 3 “go to” products



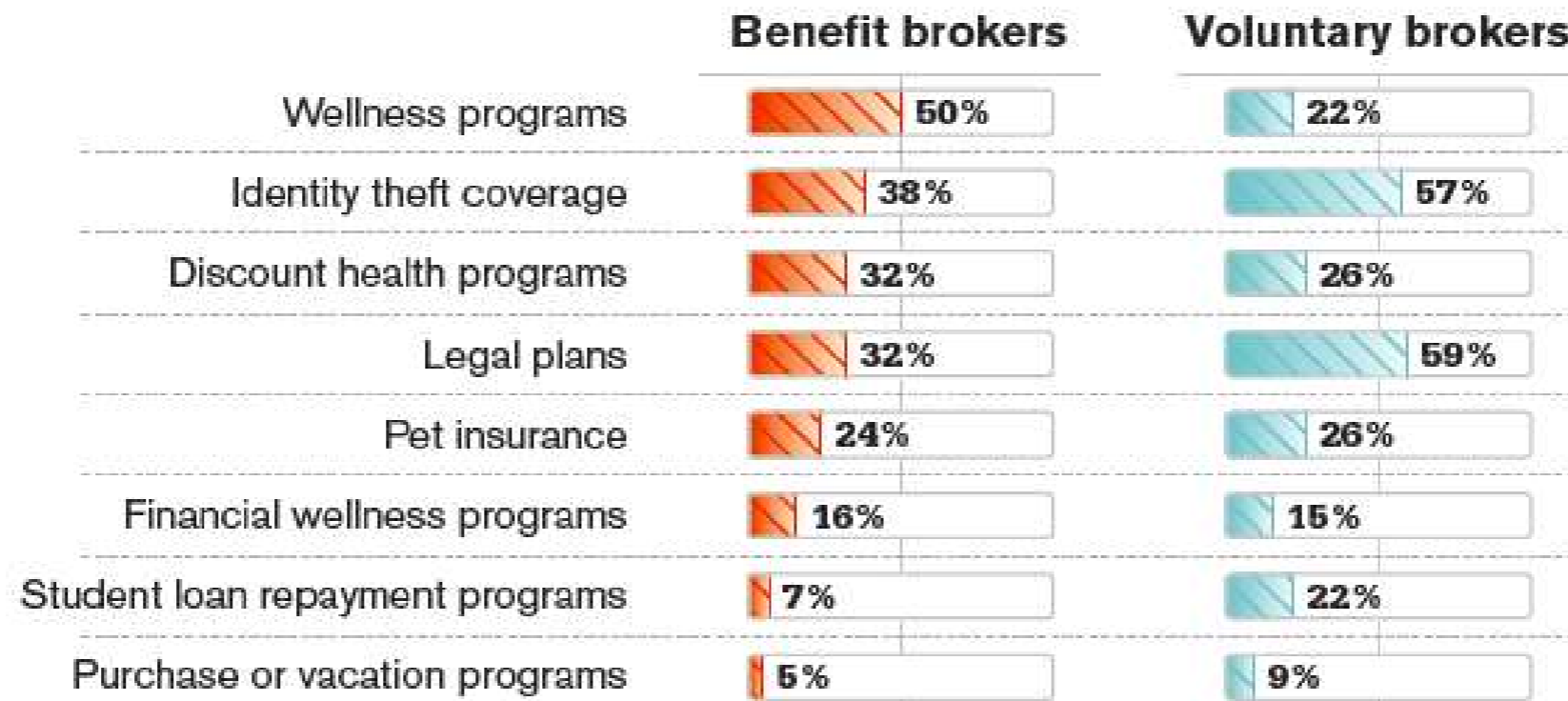
Evidence that **Accident, Critical Illness and Hospital Plans** are still “basic” VB options but if Life & Disability **fail to be ER-paid**, then voluntary steps in

# Voluntary Benefit Trends - June 2020 Benefit Pros

3

## Nontraditional products are gaining ground.

Half of brokers say they regularly sell wellness programs, and 59 percent of voluntary brokers regularly sell legal plans. Identity theft and discount health programs are also among the top five nontraditional products sold by both types of brokers. About a quarter of brokers also now regularly sell pet insurance.



Due to employees working at home/being online more, ID THEFT is one of the most requested “non-traditional benefits”

Disability  
Insurance



# Disability Insurance

**Disability** is “income replacement” (typically 60%) – aka “paycheck protection program” – should an employee get sick (or hurt off the job)

- Short-Term Disability (STD): tax-free monthly benefit (typically **replacing 60% of gross income**) to replace an employee’s paycheck and benefit period of three or six months. Coverage is typically employee-only and covers maternity

“**Covid-Friendly**” carriers should include:

- “Guarantee Issue” - **NO HEALTH QUESTIONS**
- Portability is typical with NO increase in premium (ideal)
- Short-Term DI plans that will **pay for a Covid diagnosis and quarantine**
- Carriers have new “bells & whistles” beyond traditional STD

- Long-term Disability (LTD): Typically employer- paid but can be employee-paid, and **employee-paid SHORT- TERM compliments LTD disability by filling 90-day “gap”**

- Pamela’s “Covid scale of importance”: **\*\*\*\*\***



# CRITICAL ILLNESS INSURANCE

Name	
Date	

# Critical Illness Insurance

**Critical Illness** provides a lump-sum tax free benefit (\$5k to \$50k) that pays CASH to an employee due a covered illness

- **Critical Illness:** Lump sum, tax-free benefit payable to employee, spouse and children (often half benefit of employee) and may include a Health Screening Benefit (typically \$50) for cancer, heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, etc.

**"Covid-Friendly"** carriers should include:

- "Guarantee Issue" - **NO HEALTH QUESTIONS**
- Some critical illness plans cover up to 35 different illnesses
- Portable - typically NO increase in premium and no decrease benefit with age
- **Infectious Disease Rider:** Some carriers cover a **Covid diagnosis** so employees can cover expenses and time off work (works well with a hospital plan) and others cover **Covid with ventilator or ICU submission**

- Pamela's "Covid scale of importance": \*\*\*\*\*



# Hospital Insurance

**Hospital Plans** provides cash benefits payable upon admission to a facility due to covered injury or illness and/or outpatient surgery and more

- Hospital Plans: Typically \$1000 + for tax-free benefit payable to employee, spouse and family. This plan is popular again. It is ideal for those with high deductible plans, covers having a baby and with so many employees getting Covid and going into the hospital, this plan needs reconsideration

**"Covid-Friendly"** carriers should include "GI" and portability as well as:

- Benefits beyond hospital such as **childcare and pet boarding**
- Transportation benefits – important in Alaska (one provider pays \$5k for air ambulance) and lodging as well
- Some plans pay for **WELLNESS test for Covid test (swab)**
- NEW: **25% increase for "health system benefit" for healthcare employee to receive higher benefits when receiving care from their employer**

- Pamela's "Covid scale of importance": \*\*\*\*\*





**LIFE**  
**INSURANCE**

PROTECT

The graphic overlay features several icons: a red heart with a white ECG line inside a pink circle; a magnifying glass; a blue shield with a white checkmark; a red umbrella; a blue cloud with a lightning bolt; and a line graph with red data points and dashed vertical lines extending downwards.

# Life Insurance

**Life Insurance** provides tax-free cash benefit to beneficiaries in the case of death and many have new “living benefit riders”...let's overview

- **Term Life:** Least expensive type of life insurance, often sold in 10, 20 and 30-year term plans with conversion options to Whole. Options for spouse and children coverage is standard. Inexpensive and affordable coverage for high-need years.
- **Universal Life:** Permanent insurance that provides flexibility with regard to premiums, additional funding options to increase case value and can provide (should provide the additional features of term life above). **WONDERFUL plans on the market**
- **Whole Life:** Permanent coverage that provides guarantees such as level premiums, death benefit up to age 100, guarantee interest rate, and while typically more expensive than UL or Term but provide for **HIGH cash value**. Complements
- **Group Term Life (GTL):** Typically **employer-paid** and premiums increase with age – normally NOT ported due to increase in premium and possible underwriting. Whole Life added on a *voluntary basis* can be offered when GTL in place and can compliment (“apple versus an orange”)

# Life Insurance, cont.

“Covid-Friendly” carriers should include features such as

- Portability & Guarantee Issue
- Added Benefit should the plan cover **GRANDCHILDREN**
- Accelerated Death Benefit - access to face amount with terminal diagnosis
- Ability to add “*Chronic Conditions Riders*” - doubles as **Long-Term Care**
- Ability to add “*Extension of Benefits Rider*” - which can DOUBLE the face amount for extended care for all family members
- Ideal if the plan will pay a **family member to care for the loved one in the homes (avoiding a long-term care facility)**
- Ideal if the plan provides bereavement guidance at no cost

- Where is Life Insurance in Pamela’s “Covid scale of importance”: \*\*\*\*\*



# “MEC” Plans (aka “Mini-Med”)

Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) Plans covers preventative health services and health screenings for employees with additional benefits

- MEC Plans: Appealing to employers who wish to provide SOME benefit to employees with 100% guarantee issue, no age bands, paid for by employee or employer or both, 100% portable at a quarter of medical premiums

## Features include:

- Preventative: paid at 100% for everyone on the plan – NO COPAYS
- Teladoc: board certified physicians available 24/7 – NO COPAYS
- PPO Network Services: co-pays only for services such as Primary Care, Specialists, Urgent Care, Diagnostics and CT/MRI Scans
- Prescription Benefits: Discounts on prescriptions

4% of employers have dropped a benefit due to Covid and 16% are considering!

- Pamela’s “Covid scale of importance”: ★★★★★

# OFFERING PLANS WITH **NO HEALTH QUESTIONS?**

## MAKE A COMMITMENT

100%

Take seriously – 100% OF employees **must opt IN or OUT to protect EMPLOYER** so understand the power of the **“GIFT”** you are giving your employees



Virtual only works if you ADD **mandatory ACTIONS** to view videos, log into enrollment platform and make a **clear “YES” or “NO”** – it’s that simple

# Dream Big – what if my VB could do more...for less

Accident Plans that pays <b>25% more if injured in organized sporting activities for all family members</b>	WOW
<b>Health System Benefit:</b> Increases benefit by 25% due to treatment in employer's facility (works on accident and hospital plans)	Great for healthcare
Hospital Indemnity Plans that covers <b>Pet Boarding</b> and <b>Mental Health &amp; Alcoholism Benefits</b>	That's cool
Dental Plans from carriers that includes <b>TELEDENTISTRY</b> ... employees have the peace of mind of not having to leave home for an appointment	Seriously!
Critical Illness plans that cover a <b>Covid Diagnosis</b> (Infectious Disease Rider) as well as <b>Placement on a ventilator</b> and <b>ICU</b> for 5 days or longer	I need that!
Accident Plans with <b>Gunshot Wound benefit &amp; Pet boarding</b>	Good idea
Wellness Benefits that will pay <b>CASH for a Covid test</b>	Timely

# GREAT NON-TRADITIONAL BENEFITS

OH SO IMPORTANT	POPULARITY	COVID COMPLIANT?
IDENTITY THEFT – SO MANY GREAT OPTIONS	75%	YES
LEGAL PLANS – EMPLOYEES and Families can update their WILL (\$1000 value) and Power of Attorney	60%	YES
STUDENT DEBT LOAN REPAY	50%	YES
Health Advisory Services / Patient Advocacy with diagnosis of critical illness: on Critical Illness plans either as a feature, or a rider or can be paid for by employer	40%	YES
Pet Insurance	70%	YES
WELLNESS PROGRAMS	60%	YES
Qualified Disaster Relief HRA – ER's pre-tax COVID expenses	NEW!	absolutely



**New:** Alliance Organizations that provide “Return to Work Plans” that provide discounts and access to rapid tests, antibody tests, gloves, disinfectants and more

Wouldn't it be great if your organization knew where to find PPE and testing materials at a discount?

These programs are here now...



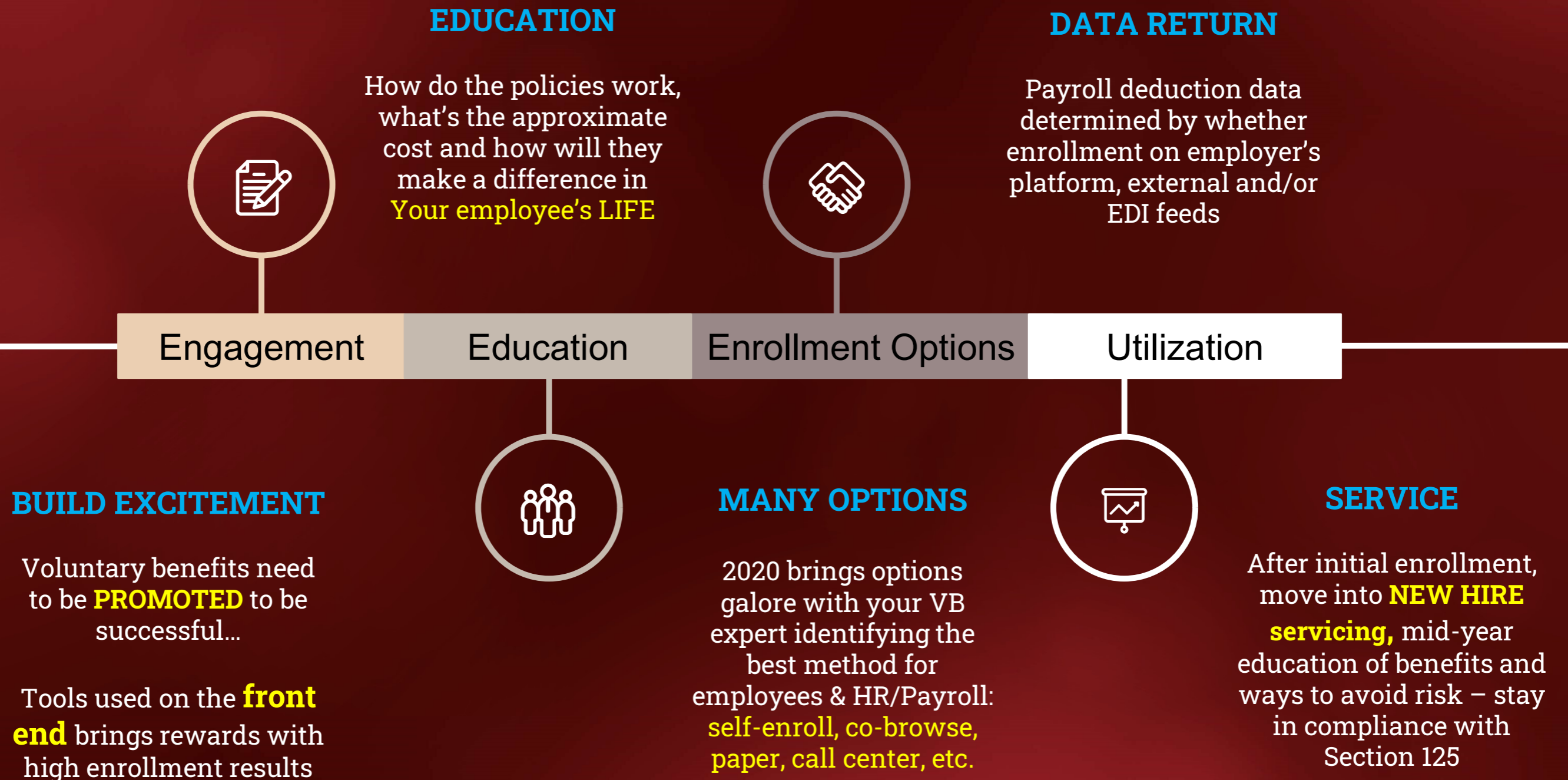
A microscopic view of cells and a virus particle. The cells are on the left, and a virus particle is at the bottom center. The background is dark red.

03.

# COMMUNICATION AND ENROLLMENT BEST PRACTICES

Products are products – use the latest tools to  
ensure **SUCCESS**

# How to Communicate & Enroll Safely and EFFECTIVELY





# ALERT

PLACEMENT OF VOLUNTARY BENEFITS  
*WITHOUT* AN **ENGAGEMENT**  
**STRATEGY** IS A WASTE OF TIME

And is the difference between 15% participation and 50%



# Creative ENGAGEMENT OPTIONS that ensure success

## VIDEOS

VB products are “personal insurance products” - they are “**emotional buys**” - build on the emotion with goal of 50% participation

## EZ-TEXTING

Employees not into e-mail or not in office? **Texting is a great way to send videos, links to enrollment platform and more**

## FLYERS

They should be branded to reflect your carrier’s message and be emotionally appealing, educational and **branded to message**

## E-MAIL BLASTS

Branded to reflect your carrier, designed for HR and typically include **links to videos, platform as well as webinar links, etc.**

## WEBINARS/MEETINGS

Replaces “group meeting” and can include video, PowerPoints and info on how to enroll in benefits and when appropriate, **great webinars work**

## VALUE-ADD’S

When appropriate, utilize “value-add” programs to drive 100% participation **for ALL EMPLOYEES** to review materials and “opt in” or “out”

# SMALL EMPLOYER (NO BENEFITS) ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

AFTER BENEFITS COMMUNICATION...	POPULARITY	COVID COMPLIANT?
FACE TO FACE REPLACED WITH CO-BROWSE ONLINE (IDEALLY USED WITH AN <b>ONLINE SCHEDULER TOOL</b> )	75%	YES
SELF-ENROLL AFTER <b>STRONG BENEFITS COMMUNICATION</b>	60%	YES
FILLABLE <b>PAPER FORMS</b> WITH ELECTIONS (NO COMPUTER) - CAN BE MAILED TO HOMES DIRECTLY	30%	YES
NON-PAYROLL DEDUCTION	60%	YES
MOBILE APPLICATIONS FOR EASE, NAV AND SELERIX - NO COMPUTER NEEDED - <b>ENROLL 24/7</b>	70%	YES
<b>CALL CENTER - WHEN BANDWIDTH A CHALLENGE</b>	60%	YES

# MID AND LARGE SIZE EMPLOYER ENROLLMENT OPTIONS

AFTER BENEFITS COMMUNICATION...MORE OPTIONS	POPULARITY	COVID COMPLIANT?
VOLUNTARY BENEFITS PLACED ON EMPLOYER'S HRIS PLATFORM (Product Hosting)	75%	YES
ONE-ON-ONE WITH A CORE ENROLLMENTS – AGENT ASSISTED OR CALL CENTER ASSISTED	60%	YES
CENSUS ENROLLMENT	30%	YES
CUSTOM WEBSITE FROM CARRIER (ONE STOP MARKETING, ENROLLMENT PORTAL AND CLAIMS SERVICING) – ENROLLMENT LINK IMBEDDED ON SITE	20%	YES
NO MORE “DEDUCTION REPORTS” WITH CARRIERS WHO DO THE RECONCILIATION FOR YOU (SELF-BILLING)	70%	YES
BENEFIT COUNSELORS AVAILABLE TO CO-BROWSE	60%	YES



easecentral

Easy to use software. Designed by brokers.



selerix  
benefits technology perfected

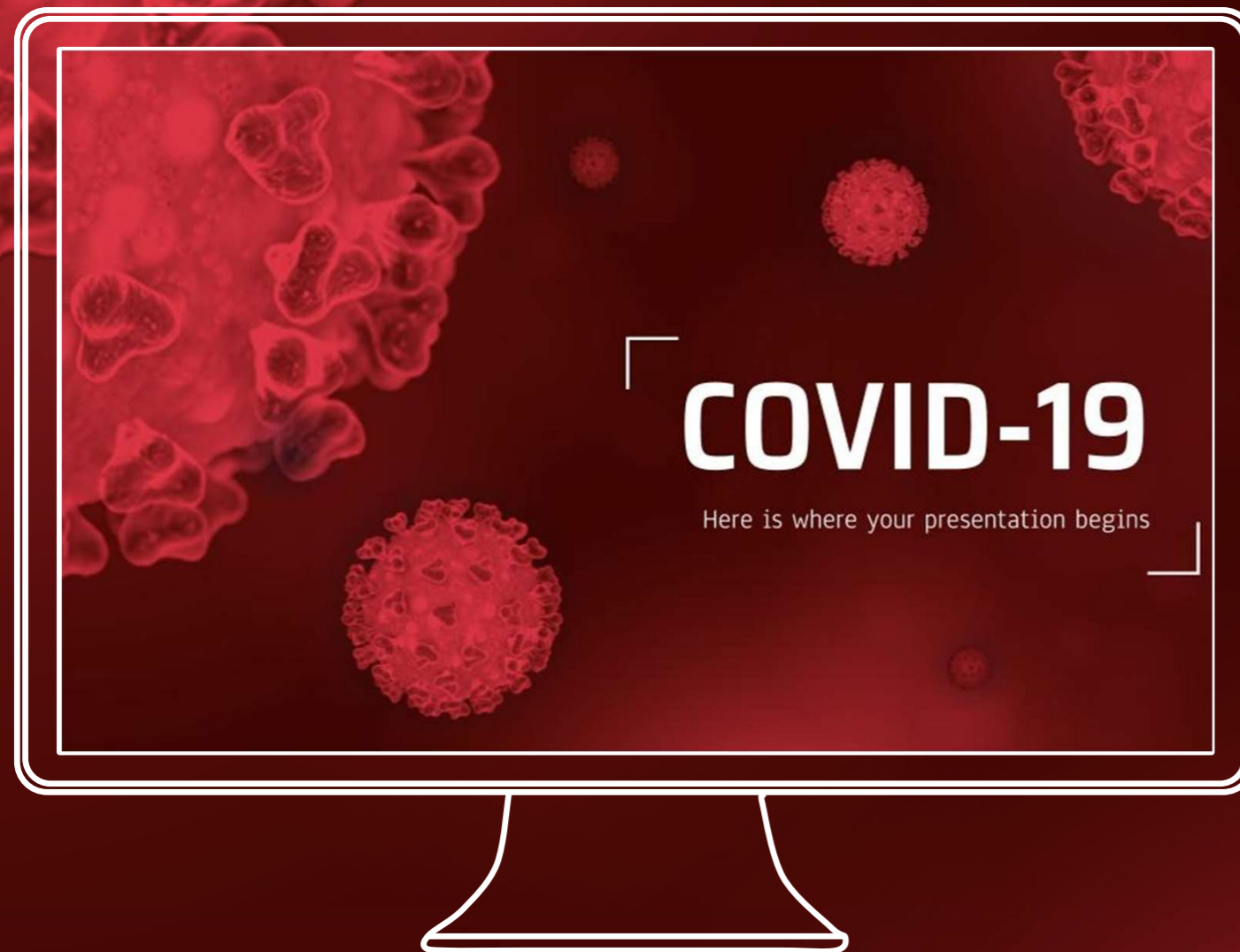
Platforms – HR’s  
“dream” when done  
right – enrolling VB or  
ALL benefits



employee  
NAVIGATOR

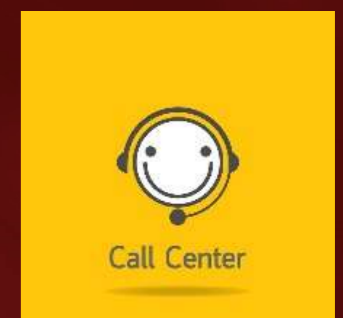


With Platforms, employees can enroll via phone, computer or with call center support



Secure  
24/7  
Easy & New  
Hire Friendly

NEVER FORGET THE PRE-ENROLLMENT COMMUNICATION WITH SELF-ENROLL & CALL CENTER SUPPORT



# Claims in 2020 and beyond

## WHAT IF THE POLICYHOLDER'S CLAIMS PROCESS WAS VIRTUAL AND INTUITIVE?

For larger organizations – carriers are taking away the EMPLOYEE's need to file claims for multiply policies. How does it work?

- **Product to Product Integration** – Employee alerts carrier of sickness/injury and carrier will see if that same incident triggers benefits **under other products in place**
- **Intuitive Claim Model** – Taking it one step further – not stopping at paying the benefit for the claim you filed. Carrier **ANTICIPATES and PAYS UPFRONT** for the follow up visits and other related needs likely to occur from initial claim
- **Medical Integration** – Carrier analyzes medical data to find claims that employees may have **OVERLOOKED or not even REALIZED WERE COVERED**



## **NEVER FORGET BASIC TOOLS**

Remember, there are FOUR generations at the workplace - NEVER forget BROCHURE/ENROLLMENT BOOKS.

Some employees need, want and have to have good "old fashioned"

## **PAPER BROCHURES**



# WHAT SERVICE SHOULD INCLUDE



## NEW HIRES- 100% HAS TO HAPPEN

VB offerings should be a **monthly process**...not once a year. Ensure you have a partner that has an easy and seamless way to let new hires enroll

## STRONG TECH TEAM

Tech abounds, so ensure you have a broker who ensure perfect reports and minimal tech/payroll issues and **quickly resolved**

## AK OFFICE FOR SUPPORT

Alaskan's are unique. When possible, work with **local support that can help with claims submission** and speak "Alaskan"

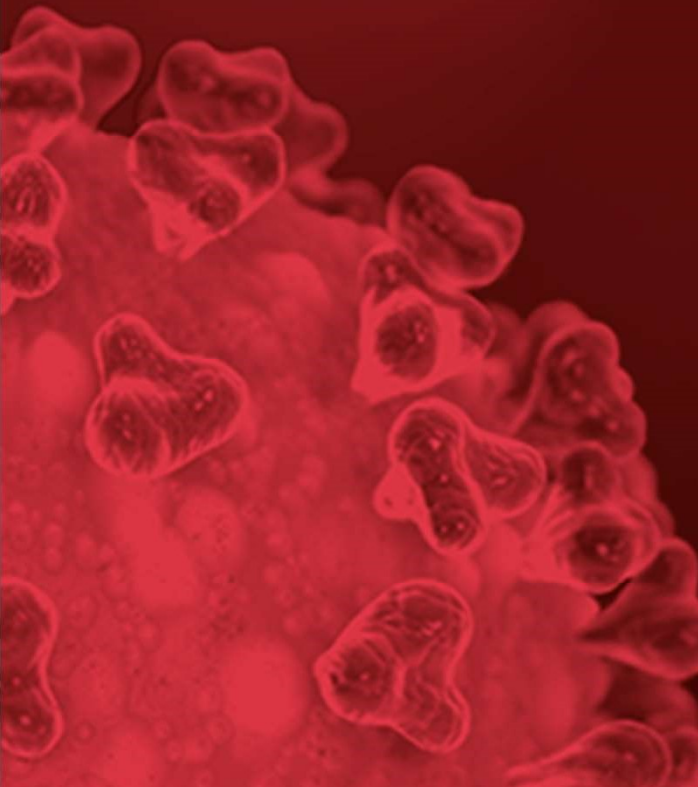
## ON-GOING TRAINING

Partner with a broker who comes in **mid-year and reviews benefits**, loves educational training as well as how to collect on **wellness benefits**

Q: Is your voluntary program ready for the new threats?

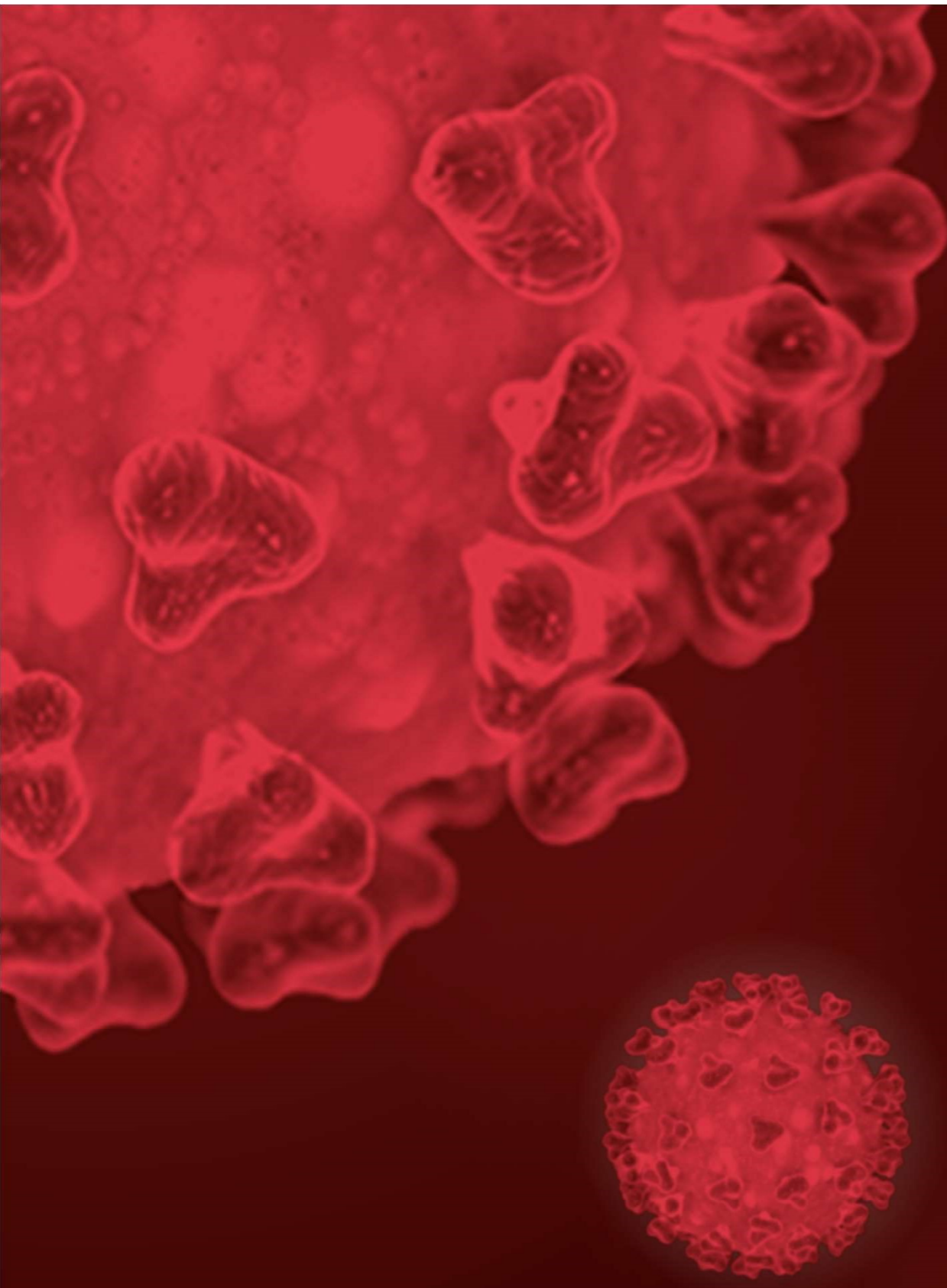
Not just in PRODUCTS, but in COMMUNICATION and ENROLLMENT SOLUTIONS?



A microscopic view of cells, likely from a tissue sample, showing various cell shapes and structures. The image is in shades of red and pink, with some cells appearing more prominent than others. The cells are clustered together, and some show internal structures like nuclei and cytoplasm.

You review benefits every year. Why not voluntary at least every five?

I have a concern that if employees don't get this coverage NOW – they will be facing “pre-existing conditions” with a Covid diagnosis...preventing them from obtaining similar valuable coverage in 2021 and beyond...



04.

# REAL WORLD SCENARIOS

Putting what we learned in action

# EVALUATE VOLUNTARY IN ALL ASPECTS

## STEP 01

If you have less than 15% (heaven forbid 10% or less) participation in VB, **you don't have a plan in place**

## STEP 03

If you don't have a way to **communicate the NEED for voluntary** AND enroll **VIRTUALLY** look to work with a broker who can

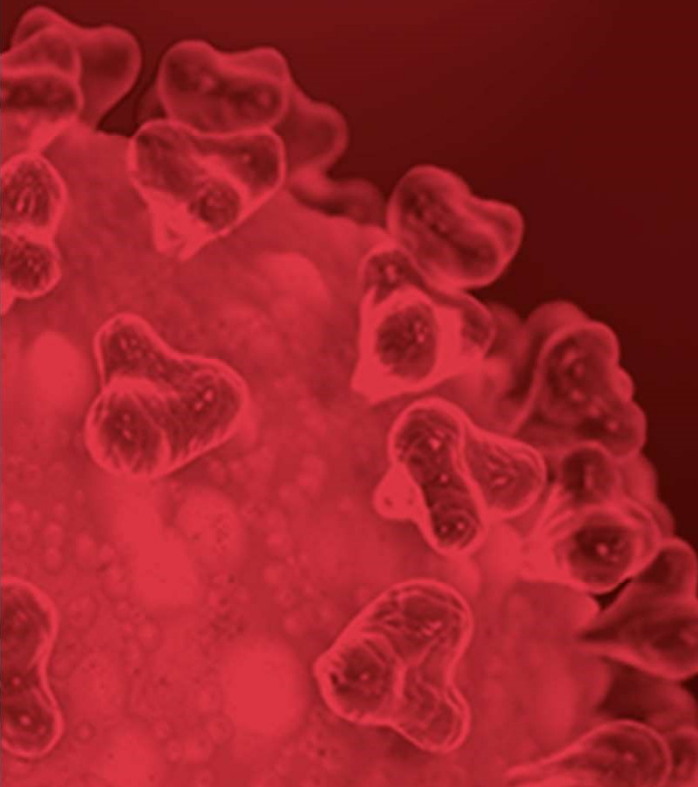
## STEP 02

If your VB carrier doesn't include benefits to help with Covid or provide "GI" - **re-evaluate** - it's easy to do

## STEP 04

Utilize a VB broker who has platforms to enroll virtually and always includes **monthly new hire strategy**





Let's "DREAM BIG"  
and design a few great  
voluntary benefit  
programs

# #1 – 40-life Construction Company

**Scenario:** Construction company with 15 office staff and 25 union in field. Stable employees, good pay, only Medical/Dental for office staff. No additional funds available for benefits, fairly low deductible, aging workforce

**Products offered-** all are 100% "GI" – NO HEALTH QUESTIONS for this campaign:

- **Short Term Disability (STD):** for paycheck replacement
- **Accident Coverage 24/7:** this benefit could possibly help ER with fraudulent Monday morning workman's compensation claims (could reduce as much as 40%)
- **Critical Illness:** Perfect benefit for aging workforce and of course,
- **Permanent Life Insurance with Living Benefit Rider:** compliments ER-paid GTL

**Benefits Communication:** Staff is all over Alaska so went with text alerts to all staff for enrollment video and link to enroll online with ability to enroll with a rep (co-browse)

**Enrollment Method:** **Ease Central** – employees can enroll on their phones if needed with simple URL - ALL employees must watch video and elect coverage or decline due to "GI"

**Value-Add:** **ID Theft** – employees selected that from a Survey Monkey

**Enrollment Servicing:** Excel data return of deductions entered into payroll and roll into monthly **new hire servicing** on all products offered

## #2 – 250-life Healthcare Entity

**Scenario:** Tight budgets are forcing this employer to raise the deductible and drop employer-paid STD. Mostly female employees and employer looking for virtual enrollment solution to replace clunky payroll software. Replace current VB carrier

**Products offered-** all are 100% “GI” – NO HEALTH QUESTIONS for this campaign:

- **Short Term Disability (STD):** for paycheck replacement, maternity benefits & Covid diagnosis
- **Accident Coverage 24/7:** coverage with sports rider for 25% increase of benefits for injuries payable to the policyholder if they are treated in the facility
- **Hospital Confinement:** Important for maternity and possible Covid hospital/ICU
- **Critical Illness:** Covering Covid diagnosis & wellness claims paying for Covid test
- **Fabulous Group Term Life:** Portable & compliments ER-paid GTL with high “GI” limits and

**Benefits Communication:** Went with custom video (CEO message included), 4 different half hour webinar times (staff had to choose one), E-Mail blasts and all going to custom website with enrollment link on the site. **Packets/brochures and rate sheets on hand for ALL employees**

**Enrollment Method:** **Ease Central** – HR is able to utilize HRIS platform (at no cost) for onboarding and benefits including voluntary and servicing of new hires is automatic

**Value-Add:** **Legal Plan** – to compliment life offering, the ability for employees to update their Will

**Enrollment Summary:** No report needed – integrated into Payroll and saved HR the cost of a platform and a data entry person to support HR/Payroll

# #3 – 2000+ Native Corp nationwide

**Scenario:** Rich benefits including STD/LTD/Group Life, but no voluntary. Have a HRIS platform and wanted to avoid external deduction data, so added had VB carrier elections “product hosted” avoiding outside deductions.

**Products offered-** all are 100% “GI” – NO HEALTH QUESTIONS for this campaign:

- **Accident Coverage 24/7:** coverage with for entire family and will help with employees who get injured in remote areas as benefit includes robust air ambulance and lodging benefits
- **Critical Illness:** Covering Covid diagnosis and includes benefits for over 35 critical illnesses and wellness benefit pays for Covid test
- **Hospital Plan:** Terrific benefit for all employees – especially due to Covid
- **Permanent Life Insurance with Living Benefit Rider:** compliments ER-paid GTL – doubling as LTC

**Benefits Communication:** Went with custom video (CEO message included) with cameos from staff and custom website landing page with individual product videos and links to file a claim, etc.

**Enrollment Method: On Platform-** Due to new offering, employees required to elect or decline coverage due to “GI” – company saved 5% on Self-Funding coverage due to same carrier for VB

**Value-Add: School Debt Payment Program** – Company is looking to hire talent and wanted a benefit that tied them to their organization

**Added Value:** Mid-year, Pamela does CE Course with highly acclaimed neurologist on “Stroke” with Dr. Lada – the goal is to educate employees on the risk of stroke and ideally lower overall HC costs

**Enrollment Summary:** No report needed – integrated into payroll

# LET'S SUMMARIZE



## EMPLOYEES ARE IN FRAGILE STATE

Americans were financially challenged BEFORE Covid. Realize **your organization can rise to the challenge now that you know**

## BUDGETS ARE TIGHT - ADD VB

Voluntary not only helps employees (at ZERO cost to your organization) - with pre-tax savings, **could LOWER your company's bottom line**

## NEW CHALLENGES = NEW BENEFITS

Alaskans have unique challenges and new VB options have premiums typically **LOWER than benefits in place with RICHER benefits**

## EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL TOOLS

The virtual tools can't just be "check a box". A **CAMPAIGN** is needed to go virtual - **choose wisely a broker who brings the talent**

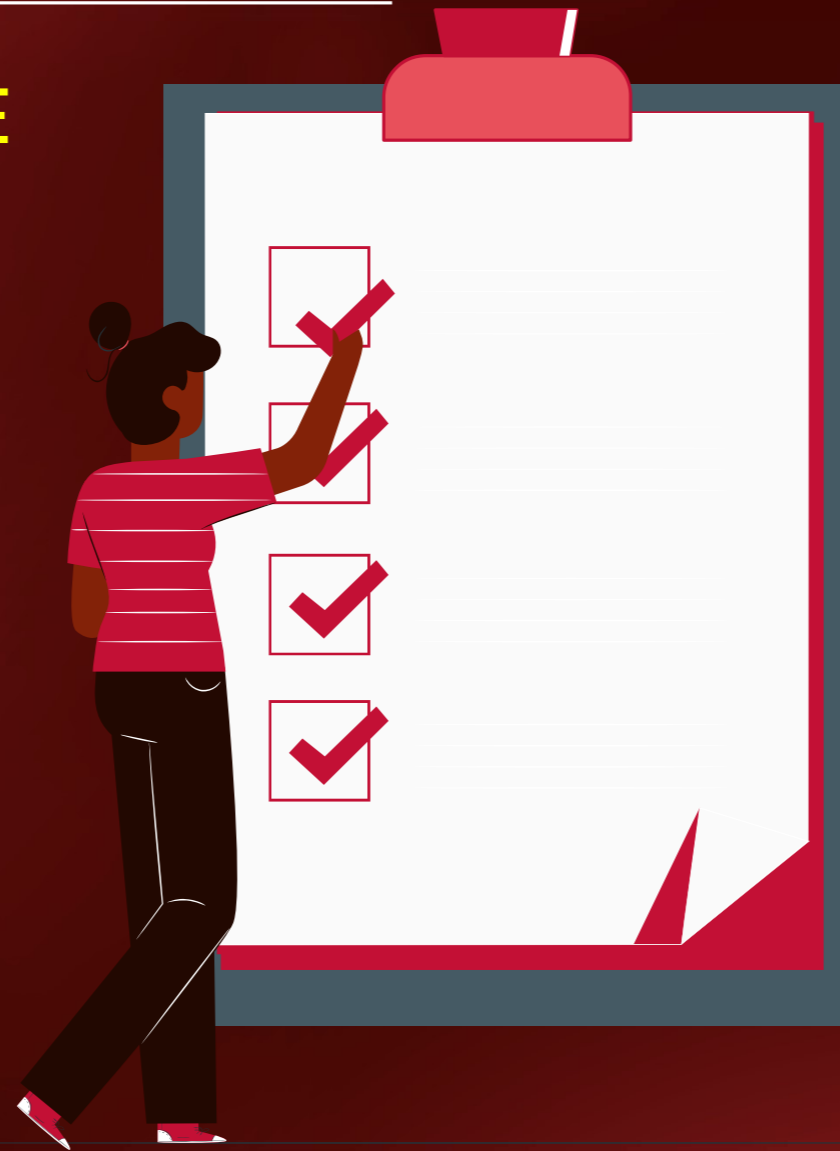
# These aren't normal times

## COVID CARE IS EXPENSIVE

Costs associated with Covid will evolve. It will **increase out-of-pocket costs**

## EMPLOYEE STRESS

Is already high. Show **COMPASSION** and provide programs that lessen financial risk

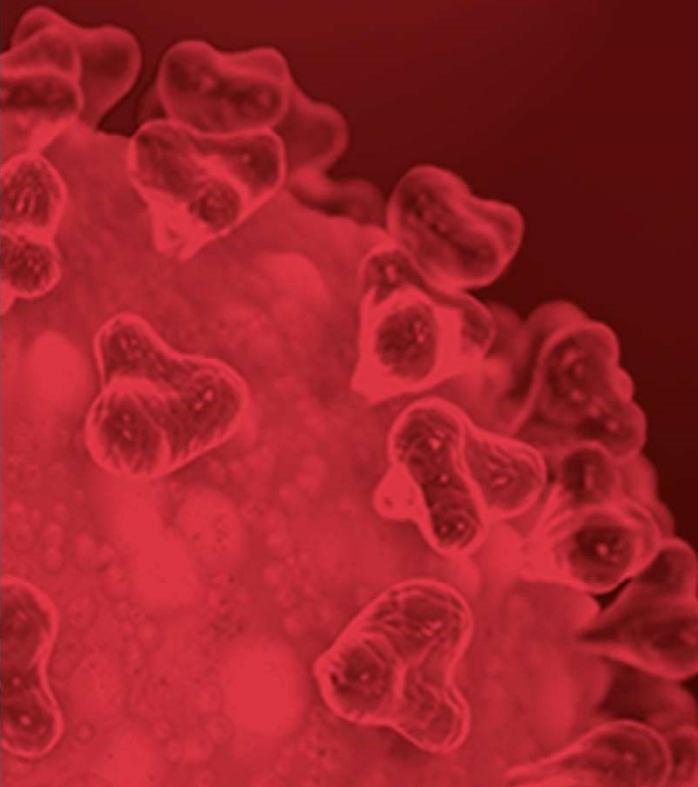


## VIRTUAL SOLUTIONS

HAVE TO BE EFFECTIVE – and that takes **creativity and experience** to know what works (done well...you WILL get 50% participation)

## SURVEYS NEVER WORKED

And really won't now. You know know what's at stake: **Covid being a pre-existing conditions in 2021 and beyond...**

A microscopic view of cells, likely from a tissue sample, showing various cell shapes and structures. The image is in shades of red and pink, with some cells appearing more prominent than others. The cells are clustered together, and some show internal organelles like nuclei and cytoplasm.

Ensure your voluntary  
benefit plan is in alignment  
with **your company's mission**  
and contributes to the well-  
being of your  
employees...and rises to the  
new threats with zero cost



**And they will have YOU  
to thank and extend their  
loyalty to YOUR company  
in 2020 and beyond**



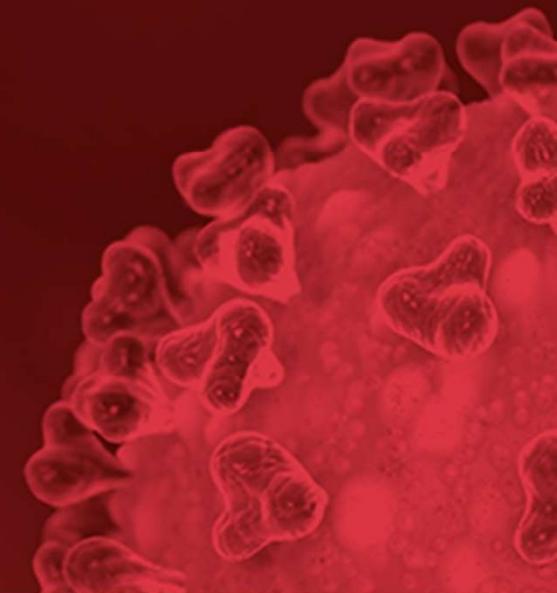


# THANK YOU



Pamela A. Whitfield  
*Founding Partner - Elite-VB LLC*  
*Anchorage, AK*

[www.elite-vb.com](http://www.elite-vb.com)





ALASKA SHRM STATE COUNCIL



## *Voluntary Benefits and Enrollment Best Practices in the New COVID World*

*Presented by Pamela Whitfield*

Certificate for Professional Development Credits:

<http://alaska.shrm.org/certificate>

Program Handouts:

<http://alaska.shrm.org/slides>

➤ Bookmark our page

<http://alaska.shrm.org>

➤ Follow us on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/AKSHRMStateCouncil>



**VIRTUAL** ALASKA STATE HR CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 24, 2020; 9:00AM – 3:00PM

REGISTRATION IS OPEN **NOW!**

<https://alaska.shrm.org/virtual-ak-state-conference-fall-2020>