



“FLEX CONNECT” VS “OMNIFLEX” BENEFITS COMPARISON

Unifor Pensions & Benefits Department

Both are flex plans operating in a similar manner where members receive so many dollars or credits at the start of each plan year which they can use to purchase one of several pre-arranged benefit packages.

Bell Aliant “Flex Connect”

Under the Flex Connect plan, the amount of flex credits any one member receives is based both on his/her earnings and the medical and dental options the member selects. While higher earning members receive more flex credits, they pay more for earnings-based benefits such as long-term disability, life insurance and AD&D.

Flex credits can be applied to the cost of medical, dental and ‘Group Assured Access (GAA)’. They cannot be applied to premiums for LTD, Life, and/or AD&D. Participation in these three benefit programs (LTD, Life and AD&D) is mandatory at the lowest option. Unused flex credits may be cashed out. Members who opt out of the Flex Connect plan can have their unused flex dollars rolled in a health spending account (HAS), which can be taken as cash or used for benefits coverage costs or a combination of both.

Bell Omniflex

All members receive the same amount of flex dollars each benefit year - \$500 – which is deposited in their individual health care spending account. The flex dollars can be used towards the cost of medical, dental, extra vacation time, personal travel insurance, optional life and accident insurance, etc. Members who opt out of medical receive \$200 additional flex dollars. Members who opt out of dental receive \$150 additional flex dollars. All unused flex dollars can be rolled back into the individual's health care spending account (HSA). They cannot be cashed out.

Bell announced that it will be granting \$100 in additional flex dollars effective January 1, 2016. Members who opt to complete the Bell Health Risk Assessment Questionnaire can receive up to \$200 additional flex dollars.

BENEFITS COVERAGE COMPARISON

MEDICAL CARE

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
Drugs	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% managed formulary; \$40 co-pay per prescription up to maximum \$400/year; drug card</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% managed formulary; \$20 co-pay per prescription up to maximum \$400/year; drug card</p> <p>Includes life sustaining OTC drugs; fertility drugs up to \$1500/year to \$300,000 lifetime max.; smoking cessation up to \$300/lifetime under Option 2 and \$500 under Option 3</p>	<p>Option 1 – no coverage; \$200 flex dollars credits in lieu</p> <p>Option 2 – 80%; drug card; no formulary</p> <p>Option 3 – 90%; drug card; no formulary</p> <p>Effective Jan. 1, 2016 optional home delivery of maintenance drugs</p>
Private Duty Nursing	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% up to \$10,000/year</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% up to \$25,000/year</p>	<p>Option 2 - \$25,000/year</p> <p>Option 3 - \$25,000/year</p>
Ambulance	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% to \$1,000 max./year</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% to \$1,000 max. per year</p>	<p>Covered</p>

* **Definition of child** – Under Flexconnect, children are defined as up to age 23 and age 25 if in school full-time. Under Bell Omniflex, children are defined as up to age 18 and age 25 if in school full-time.

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
Vision Care	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% to maximum of \$150/24 months (12 months for children under age 18); includes eye exams</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% to maximum of \$250/24 months (12 months for children under age 18); includes eye exams</p>	<p>Option 1 – no coverage</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% to \$150/2 years plus eye exam reimbursed at 80%</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% to \$200/2 years plus eye exam reimbursed at 90%</p>
Supplementary Medical	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80%, authorized list</p> <p>Option 3 – 90%, authorized list</p>	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80%</p> <p>Option 3 – 90%</p>
Hearing Aids	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% up to \$300 per ear every 3 years</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% up to \$600 per ear every 3 years</p>	<p>1 hearing aid per ear per lifetime</p>
Medical Practitioners*	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% to maximum \$500/year per practitioner (no maximum for physiotherapy)</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% to maximum of \$750/year per practitioner (no maximum for physiotherapy)</p>	<p>Option 1 – no coverage</p> <p>Option 2 – 80% to \$1,000/year combined max.; psychologist and social worker combined \$1500/year; nursing services \$25,000/year</p> <p>Option 3 – 90% to \$1,250/year combined max.; psychologist and social worker combined \$1500/year; nursing services \$25,000/year</p>
Orthopaedic Shoes & Orthotics	<p>Option 1 – n/a</p> <p>Option 2 – covered</p> <p>Option 3 - covered</p>	<p>Shoes only – 50% of cost, max. 2 pairs per year</p> <p>No orthotic coverage</p>

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
Emergency Dental	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – covered Option 3 – covered	Covered
Hospital	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – 100% semiprivate Option 3 – 100% private	Option 1 – no coverage Option 2 – 80% semiprivate to max. room rate Option 3 – 90% private to max. room rate
Convalescent Hospital	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – covered Option 3 – covered	No coverage
Travel Health Insurance	Option 1 – employee only (mandatory participation) Option 2 – employee, couple, family Option 3 – employee, couple, family	Option 1, 2 & 3 – business only Can use flex dollars to purchase personal travel insurance (\$19 per single \$52 per family), 1 M max./year, includes trip cancellation insurance
Lock-in Period	Option 1 – 1 year Option 2 – 1 year Option 3 – 2 years**	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – 1 year Option 3 – 2 years

***Under Flex Connect, medical practitioners include: massage therapist (require prescription); chiropractor; osteopath; podiatrist; naturopath; speech therapist; physiotherapist (no max.); psychologist; audiologist; occupational therapist; homeopath; acupuncturist; chiropodist; dietician (requires prescription). No social worker coverage.**

Under Bell Omniflex plan, medical practitioners include Massage therapist, Chiropractor, Osteopath, Podiatrist, Chiropodist, Naturopath, Speech Therapist, Physiotherapist, Athletic Therapist, Audiologist, Occupational Therapist, Homeopath, and Acupuncturist.

****Can change status (family/couple/single) within 31 days of family status change, lock-in continues to apply**

DENTAL CARE

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
Fee Guide	Current	2 year lag Effective Jan. 1, 2016 – current fee guide
Basic	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – 80%, 1 recall per year Option 3 – 80%, 2 recalls per year Option 4 – 90%, 2 recalls per year	Option 1 – no coverage; \$150 flex dollars credit in lieu Option 2 – 80% no max., recalls every 9 months Option 3 – 90% no max.; recalls every 9 months
Major restorative	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – n/a Option 3 – 50% Option 4 – 70%	Option 1 – no coverage Option 2 – 50% to \$1500/person annual max. Option 3 – 60% to \$1750/person annual max.
Annual Maximum	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – no annual max. Option 3 - \$1,500 for basic and major combined Option 4 - \$2,000 for basic and major combined	On major services only Option 2 - \$1500/person/year Option 3 - \$1750/person/year
Orthodontics	Option 1 – n/a Option 2 – n/a Option 3 – n/a Option 4 – 50%; \$2,000 lifetime max per adult or child	No coverage available Bell announced that this coverage will be available under Option 3 effective January 1, 2016 at 50% up to \$2,500/lifetime/person Ortho history of lifetime max. carried forward from flexconnect

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
Lock-in Period	Option 1 – 1 year Option 2 – 1 year Option 3 – 1 year Option 4 – 3 years	Option 1 – 1 year Option 2 – 1 year Option 3 - 2 years

*** Flex Connect 'basic' dental services include diagnostic, preventative, periodontal, restorative, endodontic, basic denture and surgical services. Major services include crowns, new dentures, and bridges.**

*** Under Bell Omniflex, flex dollars can be used to purchase personal travel insurance, optional life and accident insurance, additional vacation time (up to 2 days at 0.4% of salary for each day purchased)**

LONG-TERM DISABILITY BENEFITS

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
	100% employee-paid	100% employer-paid
Benefit Level	Option 1 – 50% of monthly earnings to \$25,000 max.(mandatory participation) Option 2 – 50% of monthly earnings + CPI (max. 2%) up to \$25,000 max. Option 3 – 60% of monthly earnings up to \$25,000 max. Option 4 – 60% of monthly earnings + CPI (2%) up to \$25,000 max. Non-taxable benefit	66-2/3% of monthly salary; taxable benefit; to age 65
Lock-In	Medical evidence required	

*** Effective January 1, 2016 Bell introduced optional critical illness insurance at 100% employee-paid.**

LIFE INSURANCE

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
	All coverage employee-paid	Basic coverage paid by employer
Employee	<p>Option 1 – 1 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max. (mandatory participation)</p> <p>Option 2 – 2 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max.</p> <p>Option 3 – 3 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max.</p> <p>Option 4 – 3 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max. plus multiples of \$10,000 to max. of \$300,000</p>	<p>1 x basic annual salary</p> <p>Optional employee life insurance up to 6 x annual salary; 100% employee-paid</p>
Spouse	<p>Option 1 – no coverage</p> <p>Option 2 – multiples of \$10,000 to \$300,000 max.</p>	<p>No coverage</p> <p>Optional spouse life insurance coverage up to \$250,000 (multiples of \$10,000); 100% employee-paid</p>
Child	<p>Option 1 – no coverage</p> <p>Option 2 - \$7,500</p> <p>Option 3 - \$15,000</p>	<p>No coverage</p> <p>Optional dependent life insurance of \$10 K, \$20 K or \$30 K; 100% employee-paid</p>

ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT (AD&D)

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
	All coverage employee-paid	Basic coverage paid by employer
Employee	<p>Option 1 – 1 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max. (mandatory participation)</p> <p>Option 2 – 2 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max.</p> <p>Option 3 – 3 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max.</p> <p>Option 4 – 3 x annual earnings to \$1.5 M max. plus multiples of \$10,000 to \$350,000 max.</p>	<p>1 x basic annual salary</p> <p>Business travel accident – 2 x basic annual salary</p> <p>Optional coverage up to 6 x annual salary; 100% employee-paid</p>
Spouse	<p>Option 1 – no coverage</p> <p>Option 2 – multiples of \$10,000 to \$200,000 max.</p>	<p>No coverage</p> <p>Optional spouse coverage up to \$250,000 (multiples of \$10,000); 100% employee-paid</p>
Child	<p>Option 1 – no coverage</p> <p>Option 2 - \$25,000</p> <p>Option 3- \$50,000</p>	<p>No coverage</p> <p>Optional dependent coverage of \$10 K, \$20 K, or \$30 K; 100% employee-paid</p>

BENEFITS COST COMPARISON

ANNUAL MEDICAL CARE COST

FLEX CONNECT*	BELL OMNIFLEX
Option 1 (opt out) - \$1444 credit (earning \$59,000) combined total incl. opt-out on all other benefits incl. dental	Option 1 (opt out) - \$200 credit (in addition to \$500)
Option 2 - \$869 single; \$1744 couple; \$2301 family	Option 2 – \$0 single and \$100 family
Option 3 - \$1391 single; \$2786 couple; \$3637 family	Option 3 - \$200 single and \$500 family

*Average member earning \$59,000/year; Bell has announced rate increases of 5% effective January 1, 2016 for the Flex Connect plan. For Option 2, single members pay an additional \$20.50/year; couple \$41.50/year; and family \$55/year. For Option 3, single members pay an additional \$45.50/year; couple \$91.50; and family \$118/year. These rate increases are reflected in the above table.

ANNUAL DENTAL COST

FLEX CONNECT*	BELL OMNIFLEX
Option 1 (opt out) - \$1444 credit (earning \$59,000) combined total incl. opt-out on all other benefits incl. dental	Option 1 (opt out) - \$150 credit (in addition to \$500)
Option 2 – \$282 single; \$516 couple; \$876 family	Option 2 - \$0 single; \$100 family
Option 3 - \$347 single; \$632 couple; \$1074 family	Option 3 - \$135 single; \$370 family
Option 4 - \$654 single; \$1196 couple; 1933 family	

*Average member earning \$59,000/year

LIFE INSURANCE

	FLEX CONNECT*	BELL OMNIFLEX
Employee Life Insurance	1 x annual earnings (mandatory) - \$106 2 x annual earnings - \$211 3 x annual earnings - \$317	Company pays 100% of premium
Optional Employee Life	\$8.40 for every \$10,000	Premiums vary based on age, gender and smoker status Ranges from \$0.10 per each \$1,000 for a non-smoker female age 45-49 to \$1.46 per each \$1,000 for a male, smoker age 65 and older
Optional Spouse Life	\$5.76 for every \$10,000	Same premiums as optional employee life
Optional Dependent Child Life	\$7500 coverage – \$10.08 \$15,000 coverage – \$19.92	\$0.11 for each \$1,000

***Average member earning \$59,000/year**

ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT

	FLEX CONNECT*	BELL OMNIFLEX
Employee AD&D	1 x annual earnings (mandatory) - \$14.37 2 x annual earnings - \$28.75 3 x annual earnings - \$43.12	Company pays 100% of premium
Optional Employee AD&D	\$1.89 for every \$10,000	\$0.0099 for each \$1,000 in coverage
Optional Spouse AD&D	\$2.16 for every \$10,000	\$0.0099 for each \$1,000
Optional Dependent Child AD&D	\$25,000 coverage – \$5.52 \$50,000 coverage – \$11.04	\$0.0099 for each \$1,000

***Average member earning \$59,000/year; Bell has announced rate increases of 10% for basic and supplemental AD&D effective January 1, 2016 for the Flex Connect plan. For basic AD&D at 1 x salary rate, members will pay an additional \$1.37/year; at 2 times salary \$2.73/year; and at 3 times salary \$4.11/year. The rate increases are reflected in the Employee AD&D rates above.**

LONG-TERM DISABILITY

FLEX CONNECT*	BELL OMNIFLEX
100% employee-paid Premiums vary by coverage and earnings: Option 1: 0.817% of salary Option 2: 0.884% of salary Option 3: 1.084% of salary Option 4: 1.168% of salary	100% employer-paid

OTHER BENEFIT COSTS

	FLEX CONNECT	BELL OMNIFLEX
Group Assured Access	Single: Option 2 (mandatory) - \$175 Options Plus - \$283 Family: Option 2 - \$350 Options Plus - \$565	Remains mandatory – premium cost under review
Personal Travel Insurance		Single - \$19/year Family - \$52/year
Vacation Buying		1 vacation day = 0.4% of annual salary; can purchase up to 2 days per year; can use flex dollars towards purchase

*** Bell has announced rate increases for Group Assured Access effective January 1, 2016 for the Flex Connect plan. For Options members pay an additional \$9.36/year for single coverage and an additional \$19.44/year for family coverage. For Options Plus, members pay an additional \$18.00/year for single coverage and an additional \$36.48/year for family coverage. These rates are reflected in the table above.**

CONCLUSION

Given members are already familiar with how flex benefit plans work, the transition to the Omniflex benefits plan should be fairly straightforward and easy for members to understand and access.

Members will be paying significantly less for their benefits under the Omniflex plan than they do now, however some members will find that their coverage has also been reduced depending on the type of benefits they use (i.e. physiotherapy).

One huge advantage with the Omniflex plan is the employer-paid LTD benefit. LTD premiums can increase significantly from one benefit year to the next depending on the number of claims submitted in a given year. Where members are paying the LTD premiums, the cost can escalate to the point where members begin to question the value of keeping the benefit coverage.

Overall, the Omniflex plan looks to be the better of the two plans in terms of less risk to members and less out-of-pocket costs, though the benefit coverage is not quite as good. For most members, the cost savings associated with this plan will offset the loss of benefit coverage. Also, Bell has announced benefit improvements effective January 1, 2016 (i.e. the inclusion of orthodontic coverage, current dental fee guide, massage therapy, etc.) which should address some key disadvantages with the plan.