IBT Consulting
Innovative Benefits

# Understanding Your Health Plan Options

### HMO vs. PPO vs. EPO

*Prepared by IBT Consulting – Your Fiduciary Benefits Partner*

Choosing the right health plan is an important decision that impacts both **your health** and **your financial well-being**. The three most common plan types—**HMO, PPO, and EPO**—each offer different levels of cost, flexibility, and access to care.

This guide is designed to help you understand those differences clearly, so you can make an informed choice with confidence.

---

## Quick Comparison

| Feature | HMO | PPO | EPO |
|---|---|---|---|
| Monthly Premium | Lowest | Highest | Moderate |
| Primary Care Physician (PCP) | Required | Not Required | Not Required |
| Specialist Referrals | Required | Not Required | Not Required |
| In-Network Coverage | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Out-of-Network Coverage | No (except emergencies) | Yes (higher cost) | No (except emergencies) |
| Flexibility | Limited | Highest | Moderate |
| Cost Predictability | High | Lower | Moderate |

---

## Plan Type Explained

### HMO – Health Maintenance Organization

An HMO emphasizes **cost control and coordinated care**.

- You select a Primary Care Physician (PCP)
- Your PCP manages your care and issues specialist referrals
- All non-emergency care must be **in-network**
- Typically offers the **lowest premiums and out-of-pocket costs**

**Ideal for:**
Those who prefer predictable costs and are comfortable with a managed care structure.

IBT Consulting
Innovative Benefits

---

### PPO – Preferred Provider Organization

A PPO provides the **most freedom of choice**.

- No PCP or referrals required
- Freedom to see both in-network and out-of-network providers
- Higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs
- Best access for specialists and nationwide coverage

**Ideal for:**
Individuals who want flexibility, travel frequently, or prefer unrestricted access to providers.

---

### EPO – Exclusive Provider Organization

An EPO blends affordability with flexibility.

- No PCP or referrals required
- Must use **in-network providers** (except emergencies)
- Lower premiums than PPOs
- Fewer restrictions than an HMO

**Ideal for:**
Those who want flexibility without referrals and are comfortable staying within a network.

---

## Which Plan Might Be Right for You?

Ask yourself:

✓ Do I want the **lowest monthly cost** and don't mind referrals? → **HMO**

✓ Do I want **maximum flexibility** and access to any provider? → **PPO**

✓ Do I want flexibility **without referrals**, but can stay in-network? → **EPO**

---

## Trusted Advisor Note from IBT Consulting

Health insurance is not just about coverage—it's about **access, value, and alignment with your real needs**. The "best" plan is the one that fits how you actually use healthcare, not just what looks good on paper.

If you have questions or want help evaluating your options, your benefits team is here to guide you.