Training course on Employee Benefits Law and ERISA

Professional Development Training Course Outline

Category	Legal Institute	**Duration**	10 Days
Base Fee	$3,000 USD	**Delivery Mode**	Online / On-site Hybrid

Course Introduction

Employee benefits constitute a significant portion of an employer's total compensation package, offering vital protections and financial security to employees and their families. This complex area of law, particularly in the United States, is heavily regulated by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA), along with provisions of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and other federal and state statutes. Navigating the intricate legal and regulatory landscape of pension plans, health and welfare plans, executive compensation, and other fringe benefits is paramount for employers, plan fiduciaries, human resource professionals, and legal counsel. Failure to comply with these stringent requirements can result in substantial penalties, litigation, and reputational damage. The continuous evolution of benefit design, healthcare reform, and investment strategies demands a profound understanding of ERISA's fiduciary duties, reporting obligations, and prohibited transactions. Training Course on Employee Benefits Law and ERISA is meticulously designed to equip participants with the advanced theoretical insights and practical tools necessary to design, administer, and maintain compliant and effective employee benefit plans, ensuring both legal integrity and competitive talent attraction and retention. This course will delve deeply into the foundational principles of ERISA, exploring its scope, key definitions, and the various types of plans it covers. Participants will gain crucial insights into the strict fiduciary duties imposed on plan administrators and asset managers, including the duties of loyalty, prudence, and diversification. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the intricate rules governing qualified retirement plans (e.g., 401(k)s, defined benefit plans), health and welfare benefit plans, and the unique challenges of executive compensation. By analyzing landmark court decisions, engaging with real-world compliance scenarios, and discussing contemporary issues such as cybersecurity for plans, data privacy, and the implications of mergers and acquisitions on employee benefits, attendees will develop the strategic acumen to effectively advise clients, mitigate legal risks, and ensure the sound and compliant operation of employee benefit programs, promoting both employee well-being and organizational financial health.

Programme Curriculum

Training Course on Employee Benefits Law and ERISA

Introduction

Employee benefits constitute a significant portion of an employer's total compensation package, offering vital protections and financial security to employees and their families. This complex area of law, particularly in the United States, is heavily regulated by the **Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA)**, along with provisions of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and other federal and state statutes. Navigating the intricate legal and regulatory landscape of **pension plans, health and welfare plans, executive compensation**, and other fringe benefits is paramount for employers, plan fiduciaries, human resource professionals, and legal counsel. Failure to comply with these stringent requirements can result in substantial penalties, litigation, and reputational damage. The continuous evolution of benefit design, healthcare reform, and investment strategies demands a profound understanding of ERISA's fiduciary duties, reporting obligations, and prohibited transactions. **Training Course on Employee Benefits Law and ERISA** is meticulously designed to equip participants with the advanced theoretical insights and practical tools necessary to design, administer, and maintain compliant and effective employee benefit plans, ensuring both **legal integrity** and competitive **talent attraction and retention**.

This course will delve deeply into the foundational principles of **ERISA**, exploring its scope, key definitions, and the various types of plans it covers. Participants will gain crucial insights into the strict **fiduciary duties** imposed on plan administrators and asset managers, including the duties of loyalty, prudence, and diversification. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the intricate rules governing **qualified retirement plans** (e.g., 401(k)s, defined benefit plans), **health and welfare benefit plans**, and the unique challenges of **executive compensation**. By analyzing landmark court decisions, engaging with real-world compliance scenarios, and discussing contemporary issues such as cybersecurity for plans, data privacy, and the implications of mergers and acquisitions on employee benefits, attendees will develop the strategic acumen to effectively advise clients, mitigate legal risks, and ensure the sound and compliant operation of employee benefit programs, promoting both **employee well-being** and **organizational financial health**.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Analyze the fundamental principles, scope, and key definitions of the **Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA)**.
2. Understand the diverse types of **employee benefit plans** and their regulatory distinctions.
3. Master the stringent **fiduciary duties** under ERISA and best practices for compliance.
4. Navigate the legal and operational complexities of **qualified retirement plans** (defined benefit and defined contribution).
5. Examine the regulatory framework for **health and welfare benefit plans** (e.g., HIPAA, COBRA, ACA).
6. Understand the unique legal challenges and design considerations for **executive compensation** plans.
7. Comply with ERISA's **reporting and disclosure** requirements (e.g., Form 5500, SPD).
8. Identify and manage **prohibited transactions** and common ERISA pitfalls.
9. Assess the impact of **mergers, acquisitions, and corporate transactions** on employee benefits.
10. Explore the legal and practical aspects of **employee benefit plan litigation** and enforcement.
11. Discuss **data privacy and cybersecurity** considerations for employee benefit plan data.
12. Identify and adapt to **emerging trends** and future challenges in employee benefits law.
13. Future of Healthcare Reform and its Impact on Employer-Sponsored Plans

Target Audience

This course is designed for professionals who manage, advise on, or are impacted by employee benefit plans:

1. **HR Professionals:** Compensation and benefits managers, HR generalists, and HR directors responsible for benefit plan administration.
2. **Legal Professionals:** Attorneys, paralegals, and legal advisors specializing in ERISA, employee benefits, tax, or labor law.
3. **Plan Fiduciaries:** Trustees, plan administrators, and members of benefits committees.
4. **Financial Advisors & Investment Managers:** Professionals advising on retirement plan investments and asset management.
5. **Compliance Officers:** Individuals responsible for ensuring adherence to benefits regulations.
6. **Accountants & Auditors:** Professionals involved in auditing employee benefit plans.
7. **Corporate Executives:** Leaders responsible for overseeing organizational benefits strategy and risk.
8. **Third-Party Administrators (TPAs):** Professionals working for firms that administer employee benefits plans.

Course Duration: 10 Days

Course Modules

Module 1: Introduction to Employee Benefits Law and ERISA

- Historical Context of Employee Benefits and the Need for ERISA
- Overview of ERISA: Purpose, Scope, and Key Titles
- Plans Covered by ERISA vs. Exempt Plans (e.g., governmental, church plans)
- Key Definitions under ERISA: Plan, Participant, Beneficiary, Fiduciary
- Interaction of ERISA with Other Federal Laws (e.g., Internal Revenue Code, PHSA, ACA)

Module 2: ERISA Fiduciary Duties and Responsibilities

- Who is an ERISA Fiduciary? Functional Definition of Fiduciary
- Core Fiduciary Duties:
  - Duty of Loyalty (solely in the interest of participants and beneficiaries)
  - Duty of Prudence (act with care, skill, prudence, and diligence)
  - Duty to Diversify Plan Investments
  - Duty to Follow Plan Documents (consistent with ERISA)
- Co-Fiduciary Liability and Delegated Responsibilities
- Prohibited Transactions and Exemptions (Statutory and Administrative)

Module 3: Qualified Retirement Plans: Defined Contribution (DC) Plans

- Overview of Defined Contribution Plans: 401(k), 403(b), 457, ESOPs
- Qualification Requirements under the Internal Revenue Code (IRC Section 401(a))
- Contribution Rules: Employee Elective Deferrals, Employer Contributions, Catch-Up Contributions
- Vesting Schedules and Distribution Rules
- Participant-Directed Accounts: ERISA Section 404(c) and Investment Fiduciary Relief
- Common Compliance Issues: Nondiscrimination Testing, Top-Heavy Rules

Module 4: Qualified Retirement Plans: Defined Benefit (DB) Plans

- Overview of Defined Benefit Plans: Traditional Pensions

- Key Characteristics: Benefit Formula, Actuarial Calculations, Funding Requirements
- Minimum Funding Standards and Funding Deficiencies
- Role of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC): Plan Termination Insurance
- Plan Design Issues: Cash Balance Plans, Hybrid Plans
- De-risking Strategies for DB Plans (e.g., lump sum windows, annuity purchases)

Module 5: Health and Welfare Benefit Plans

- Overview of Health and Welfare Plans: Medical, Dental, Vision, Life, Disability, Severance
- Key Federal Laws Governing Health Plans:
    - **HIPAA:** Privacy, Security, Portability
    - **COBRA:** Continuation Coverage Requirements
    - **ACA (Affordable Care Act):** Employer Mandates, Market Reforms, Reporting Requirements
- Self-Funded vs. Insured Plans: Legal and Regulatory Differences
- Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA)
- ERISA preemption and state insurance laws

Module 6: Executive Compensation and Non-Qualified Plans

- Distinguishing Qualified vs. Non-Qualified Deferred Compensation Plans
- Types of Non-Qualified Plans: SERPs, Phantom Stock, Restricted Stock Units (RSUs)
- Legal and Tax Implications of Non-Qualified Plans: IRC Section 409A Compliance
- Executive Employment Agreements and Severance Arrangements
- Golden Parachutes and Change-in-Control Provisions
- ERISA's "Top Hat" Exemption for Non-Qualified Plans

Module 7: Reporting and Disclosure Requirements

- ERISA's Disclosure Framework: Transparency for Participants
- Summary Plan Description (SPD): Content, Delivery Requirements
- Annual Reporting: Form 5500 Series Filings
- Summary Annual Report (SAR), Summary of Material Modifications (SMM)
- Other Disclosure Requirements: Blackout Notices, QDIA Notices
- Penalties for Non-Compliance with Reporting and Disclosure

Module 8: Prohibited Transactions and Related Party Rules

- Understanding ERISA's Prohibited Transaction Rules
- Parties in Interest and Disqualified Persons
- Types of Prohibited Transactions: Direct and Indirect Dealings, Self-Dealing
- Statutory and Administrative Exemptions from Prohibited Transactions (e.g., PTABEs)
- Consequences of Prohibited Transactions: Excise Taxes, Correction Requirements
- Fiduciary Responsibility in Selecting and Monitoring Service Provider

Module 9: Employee Benefits in Mergers, Acquisitions, and Corporate Transactions

- Due Diligence for Employee Benefit Plans in M&A
- Treatment of Retirement Plans in Transactions: Merger, Spin-off, Termination
- Health and Welfare Plan Integration and Transition Issues
- Severance Pay and Change in Control Benefits in Transactions
- Successor Liability Issues for Employee Benefits

- Post-Closing Integration Challenges and Strategies

Module 10: Employee Benefits Litigation and Enforcement

- Causes of Action under ERISA: Breach of Fiduciary Duty, Denial of Benefits, Prohibited Transactions
- Standing to Sue and Exhaustion of Administrative Remedies
- Remedies Available: Equitable Relief, Damages, Attorneys' Fees
- Role of the Department of Labor (DOL), IRS, and PBGC in Enforcement
- Class Action Litigation in Employee Benefits

Module 11: Data Privacy and Cybersecurity for Benefit Plans

- The Importance of Protecting Participant Data (Personally Identifiable Information - PII)
- ERISA's Implied Fiduciary Duty to Protect Plan Data
- Applicability of HIPAA Privacy and Security Rules to Health Plans
- Cybersecurity Best Practices for Plan Sponsors and Service Providers
- Developing a Cybersecurity Policy for Employee Benefit Plans
- Breach Notification Requirements

Module 12: Emerging Trends and Future Challenges

- Impact of ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) Considerations on Plan Investments
- Retirement Savings Crisis and Policy Responses (e.g., state-sponsored IRAs)
- Future of Healthcare Reform and its Impact on Employer-Sponsored Plans
- Legal Implications of AI in Benefits Administration and Fiduciary Decision-Making
- Litigation Trends: Fee Litigation, Cryptocurrency in 401(k)s, ESG Challenges
- Global Benefits Harmonization and Cross-Border Considerations

Training Methodology

- **Interactive Workshops:** Facilitated discussions, group exercises, and problem-solving activities.
- **Case Studies:** Real-world examples to illustrate successful community-based surveillance practices.
- **Role-Playing and Simulations:** Practice engaging communities in surveillance activities.
- **Expert Presentations:** Insights from experienced public health professionals and community leaders.
- **Group Projects:** Collaborative development of community surveillance plans.
- **Action Planning:** Development of personalized action plans for implementing community-based surveillance.
- **Digital Tools and Resources:** Utilization of online platforms for collaboration and learning.
- **Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Sharing experiences and insights on community engagement.
- **Post-Training Support:**

Upcoming Scheduled Sessions

Start Date	End Date	Location	Price
07 Sep 2026	18 Sep 2026	Physical	$3,000
14 Sep 2026	25 Sep 2026	Physical	$3,000

Start Date	End Date	Location	Price
21 Sep 2026	02 Oct 2026	Physical	$3,000
28 Sep 2026	09 Oct 2026	Physical	$3,000
05 Oct 2026	16 Oct 2026	Physical	$3,000
12 Oct 2026	23 Oct 2026	Physical	$3,000
19 Oct 2026	30 Oct 2026	Physical	$3,000
26 Oct 2026	06 Nov 2026	Physical	$3,000

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