

## **\*\*CONTINUATION COVERAGE RIGHTS UNDER COBRA\*\***

### **Introduction**

You are receiving this notice because you have recently become covered under the following employer's \_\_\_\_\_ (the Plan) group plan.

*Employer name*

This notice contains important information about your right to COBRA continuation coverage, which is a **temporary** extension of coverage under the Plan, as well as other health coverage alternatives that may be available to you through the Health Insurance Marketplace. **This notice explains COBRA continuation coverage, when it may become available to you and your family, and what you need to do to protect the right to receive it.**

The right to COBRA continuation coverage was created by a federal law, Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA). COBRA continuation coverage can become available to you and to other members of your family who are covered under the Plan when you would otherwise lose your group health coverage. This notice gives only a **summary** of your COBRA continuation coverage rights. For more information about your rights and obligations under the Plan and under federal law, you should either review the Plan's Summary Plan Description or get a copy of the Plan Document from your district.

### **You may have other options available to you when you lose group health coverage**

For example, you may be eligible to buy an individual plan through the Health Insurance Marketplace. By enrolling in coverage through the Marketplace, you may qualify for lower costs on your monthly premiums and lower out-of-pocket costs. Additionally, you may qualify for a 30-day special enrollment period for another group health plan for which you are eligible (such as a spouse's plan), even if that plan generally doesn't accept late enrollees.

### **What is COBRA Continuation Coverage?**

COBRA continuation coverage is a continuation of Plan coverage when coverage would otherwise end because of a life event known as a "qualifying event." Specific qualifying events are listed later in the notice. COBRA continuation coverage must be offered to each person who is a "qualified beneficiary." A qualified beneficiary is someone who will lose coverage under the Plan because of a qualifying event. Depending on the type of qualifying event, employees, spouses of employees, and dependent children of employees may be qualified beneficiaries. Under the Plan, qualified beneficiaries who elect COBRA continuation coverage must pay for COBRA continuation coverage.

If you are an employee, you will become a qualified beneficiary if you will lose your coverage under the Plan because either one of the following qualifying events happens:

- (1) Your hours of employment are reduced, or
- (2) Your employment ends for any reason other than your gross misconduct.

If you are the spouse of an employee, you will become a qualified beneficiary if you will lose your coverage under the Plan because any of the following qualifying events happens:

- (1) Your spouse dies;
- (2) Your spouse's hours of employment are reduced;
- (3) Your spouse's employment ends for any reason other than his or her gross misconduct;
- (4) Your spouse becomes enrolled in Medicare (Part A, Part B, or both); or
- (5) You become divorced or legally separated from your spouse.

Your dependent children will become qualified beneficiaries if they will lose coverage under the Plan because any of the following qualifying events happens:

- (1) The parent-employee dies;
- (2) The parent-employee's hours of employment are reduced;
- (3) The parent-employee's employment ends for any reason other than his or her gross misconduct;
- (4) The parent-employee becomes enrolled in Medicare (Part A, Part B, or both);
- (5) The parents become divorced or legally separated; or
- (6) The child stops being eligible for coverage under the plan as a "dependent child."

### **When is COBRA Continuation Coverage Available?**

The plan will offer COBRA continuation to qualified beneficiaries only after the Plan Administrator has been notified that a qualifying event has occurred. When the qualifying event is the end of employment or reduction of hours of employment, death of the employee, or enrollment of the employee in Medicare (Part A, Part B, or both), the employer must notify the Plan Administrator of the qualifying event.

There may be other coverage options for you and your family. When key parts of the health care law take effect, you'll be able to buy coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace. In the Marketplace, you could be eligible for a new kind of tax credit that lowers your monthly premiums right away, and you can see what your premium, deductibles, and out-of-pocket costs will be before you make a decision to enroll. Being eligible for COBRA does not limit your eligibility for coverage for a tax credit through the Marketplace. Additionally, you may qualify for a special enrollment opportunity for another group health plan for which you are eligible (such as a spouse's plan), even if the plan generally does not accept late enrollees, if you request enrollment within 30 days.

### **You Must Give Notice of Some Qualifying Events**

For the other qualifying events (divorce or legal separation of the employee and spouse or a dependent child losing eligibility for coverage as a dependent child), you must notify your district.

Your dependent child may be eligible for continued coverage under your policy during the period of time he/she:

- (1) Is incapable of self-sustaining employment by reason of a physically or mentally disabling injury, illness or condition and,
- (2) Is chiefly dependent upon you for support and maintenance

If your dependent will meet both of these criteria at the time he/she reaches the dependent maximum age, please submit documentation demonstrating compliance with both criteria within 60 days. If you do not submit adequate documentation within the appropriate time, your disabled child will not be covered under your policy after he/she reaches the dependent maximum age.

**The Plan requires you to notify the Plan Administrator within 60 days after the qualifying event occurs.**

### **How is COBRA Continuation Coverage Provided?**

Once the Plan Administrator receives notice that a qualifying event has occurred, COBRA continuation coverage will be offered to each of the qualified beneficiaries. Each qualified beneficiary will have an independent right to elect COBRA continuation coverage. Covered employees may elect COBRA continuation coverage on behalf of their spouses, and parents may elect COBRA continuation coverage on behalf of their children.

For each qualified beneficiary who elects COBRA continuation coverage, COBRA continuation coverage will begin either (1) on the date of the qualifying event or (2) on the date that Plan coverage would otherwise have been lost, depending on the nature of the Plan.

COBRA continuation coverage is a **temporary** continuation of coverage. When the qualifying event is the death of the employee, your divorce or legal separation, or a dependent child losing eligibility as a dependent child, COBRA continuation coverage lasts for up to 36 months.

When the qualifying event is the end of employment or reduction of the employee's hours of employment, COBRA continuation coverage generally lasts for up to a total of 18 months. There are two ways in which this 18-month period of COBRA continuation coverage can be extended.

### **Disability extension of 18-month period of continuation coverage**

If you or anyone in your family covered under the Plan is determined by the Social Security Administration to be disabled and you notify the Plan Administrator in a timely fashion, you and your entire family may be entitled to receive up to an additional 11 months of COBRA continuation coverage, for a total maximum of 29 months. The disability would have to have started at some time before the 60th day of COBRA continuation coverage and must last at least until the end of the 18-month period of continuation coverage.

### **Second qualifying event extension of 18-month period of continuation coverage**

If your family experiences another qualifying event while receiving COBRA continuation coverage, the spouse and dependent children in your family can get additional months of COBRA continuation coverage, up to a **maximum of 36 months**. This extension is available to the spouse and dependent children if the former employee dies, or gets divorced or legally separated. The extension is also available to a dependent child when that child stops being eligible under the Plan as a dependent child. **In all of these cases, you must make sure that the Plan Administrator is notified of the second qualifying event within 60 days of the second qualifying event.**

### **Other Coverage Options Available besides COBRA Continuation Coverage**

Instead of enrolling in COBRA continuation coverage, there may be other coverage options for you and your family through the Health Insurance Marketplace, Medicaid, or other group health plan coverage options (such as a spouse's plan) through what is called a "special enrollment period." Some of these options may cost less than COBRA continuation coverage. You can learn more about many of these options at [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.HealthCare.gov).

### **For More Information**

If you have questions about your COBRA continuation coverage, you should contact the Plan Administrator. For more information about your rights under the Employment Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), including COBRA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and other laws affecting group health plans, contact the nearest Regional or District Office of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) in your area, visit the website at [www.dol.gov/ebsa](http://www.dol.gov/ebsa) or call their toll-free number at (866) 444-3272. For more information about health insurance options available through a Health Insurance Marketplace, visit [www.HealthCare.gov](http://www.HealthCare.gov).

### **Keep Your Plan Informed of Address Changes**

In order to protect your family's rights, you should keep the Plan Administrator informed of any changes in the addresses of family members. You should also keep a copy, for your records, of any notices you send to the Plan Administrator.