



Benefits Administration Letter

Number: 05-411

Date: December 30, 2005

Subject: Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program: Delayed Reinstatement of FEHB for Employees and Annuitants with TRICARE Reserve Select

PURPOSE

TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) is a new premium-based TRICARE health plan offered for purchase by certain members and former members of the military Reserve Component (RC) and their families. TRS coverage is available for purchase by eligible RC members who were called or ordered to active duty, under Title 10, in support of a contingency operation on or after September 11, 2001. The Reserve Components include the Army National Guard, the Army Reserve, the Navy Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve, and the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. RC members and their Reserve Component unit will normally agree for the member to stay in the Select Reserve for one or more whole years to qualify. Members can get one year of TRS coverage for each 90 days of additional service.

As a result of this new program, returning employees or annuitants may ask you to postpone reinstating their FEHB enrollment until their TRS coverage expires. This Benefits Administration Letter explains how to honor those requests. See BAL # 05-402 for a discussion of postponing reinstatement or enrollment under Transitional TRICARE. The waiver form included with this BAL has been designed so it can be used to postpone reinstatement under Transitional TRICARE or TRS. Only one waiver form is necessary if the individual postpones reinstatement of enrollment under Transitional TRICARE and subsequently enrolls in TRS. The same waiver and reenrollment procedures apply under both programs.

Employees may ask their agencies to postpone reinstatement of their FEHB enrollment from the date they are restored to their civilian positions until the day after their Transitional TRICARE or TRS coverage ends, or any date within this timeframe.

Annuitants may ask their retirement offices to postpone reinstatement of their FEHB coverage from the date they are separated from the uniformed services until the day after their Transitional TRICARE or TRS coverage ends, or any date within this timeframe.

PROCESSING REQUESTS

In order to process a request to postpone reinstatement of an FEHB enrollment, you must obtain a waiver of FEHB coverage from the employee or annuitant. Attached is a Waiver of Immediate Reinstatement of FEHB that you may use for this purpose. The waiver should be completed at the earliest opportunity following the employee's return to their civilian position, or following the annuitant's separation from the uniformed services.

An employee or annuitant may revoke the waiver and return to FEHB coverage at any time before the Transitional TRICARE or TRS coverage ends. If revoking the waiver, he/she must sign and date the revocation request at the bottom of the waiver form, and FEHB coverage becomes effective immediately.

The waiver automatically terminates upon death of the employee or annuitant if he/she dies before Transitional TRICARE or TRS coverage ends. If the employee or annuitant postponed reinstatement of a Self and Family FEHB enrollment and his/her survivors would otherwise meet all requirements to continue FEHB as survivors annuitants, the FEHB entitlement for the survivor annuitants is immediate.

Postponement of automatic reinstatement in FEHB because of Transitional TRICARE or TRS will not affect eligibility to continue FEHB enrollment into retirement. While the time an employee is covered under Transitional TRICARE or TRS counts toward meeting the 5-year/initial opportunity requirement to continue FEHB into retirement, the employee must be covered under FEHB on the day he/she retires. If the employee plans to retire during the Transitional TRICARE or TRS period, he/she must reinstate FEHB coverage before the retirement date.

Please assist your employees or annuitants who return from military service to avoid any breaks in health insurance coverage between the end of their Transitional TRICARE or TRS coverage and the reinstatement of their FEHB.

If you have further questions regarding this letter, please contact Michael Kaszynski at 202.606.0004. As we develop questions and answers about this topic, we will add them to the Frequently Asked Questions section on our FEHB webpage at www.opm.gov/insure/health.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Danbeck
Associate Director
for Human Resources Products and Services

Attachment