

COBRA

The right to COBRA continuation coverage was created by a federal law, the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA). COBRA continuation coverage can become available to you when you would otherwise lose your group health coverage. It can also become available to other members of your family who are covered under the Plan when they would otherwise lose their group health coverage.

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 this notice. After a qualifying event, COBRA continuation coverage must be offered to each person who is a “qualified beneficiary.” You, your spouse, and your dependent children could become qualified beneficiaries if coverage under the Plan is lost because of the qualifying event. 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 lose your coverage under the Plan because either one of the following qualifying events happens:

- Your hours of employment are reduced, or
- 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 lose your coverage under the Plan because any of the following qualifying events happens:

- Your spouse dies;
- Your spouse’s hours of employment are reduced;
- Your spouse’s employment ends for any reason other than his or her gross misconduct;
- Your spouse becomes entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both); or
- You become divorced or legally separated from your spouse.

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

- The parent-employee dies;
- The parent-employee’s hours of employment are reduced;
- The parent-employee’s employment ends for any reason other than his or her gross misconduct;
- The parent-employee becomes entitled to Medicare benefits (Part A, Part B, or both);
- The parents become divorced or legally separated; or
- The child stops being eligible for coverage under the plan as a “dependent child.”

When is COBRA Coverage Available?

The Plan will offer COBRA continuation coverage to qualified beneficiaries only after the Benefits Office 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, commencement of a proceeding in bankruptcy with respect to the employer, or the employee’s becoming entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both), the employer must notify the Benefits Office of the qualifying event.

Notification Requirements

For the other qualifying events (divorce or legal separation of the employee and spouse or a dependent child’s losing eligibility for coverage as a dependent child), you must notify the Benefits Office in writing within 60 days after the qualifying event occurs and provide documentation of the event.

When the Benefits Office has been notified that one of these events has occurred, they will in turn notify you and your dependents of the right to elect continuation coverage.

If you do not elect continuation coverage within 60 days from the date of the notice from the Benefits Office, your group medical insurance coverage will end retroactively to the date of the event that caused the loss of coverage.

If you elect continuation coverage, you will have the same medical coverage you had before the event, although it may be modified if coverage changes for similarly situated participants.

How is COBRA Coverage Provided?

Once the Benefits Office 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.

COBRA continuation coverage is a temporary continuation of coverage. When the qualifying event is the death of the employee, the employee's becoming entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both), your divorce or legal separation, or a dependent child's losing eligibility as a dependent child, COBRA continuation coverage lasts for up to a total of 36 months. When the qualifying event is the end of employment or reduction of the employee's hours of employment, and the employee became entitled to Medicare benefits less than 18 months before the qualifying event, COBRA continuation coverage for qualified beneficiaries other than the employee lasts until 36 months after the date of Medicare entitlement. For example, if a covered employee becomes entitled to Medicare 8 months before the date on which his employment terminates, COBRA continuation coverage for his spouse and children can last up to 36 months after the date of Medicare entitlement, which is equal to 28 months after the date of the qualifying event (36 months minus 8 months). Otherwise, when the qualifying event is the end of employment or reduction of the employee's hours of employment, COBRA continuation coverage generally lasts for only 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 Benefits Office in a timely manner, 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. You must notify the Benefits Office within 60 days after the qualifying event occurs and provide documentation of the event.

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

If your family experiences another qualifying event while receiving 18 months of COBRA continuation coverage, the spouse and dependent children in your family can get up to additional months of COBRA continuation coverage, for a maximum of 36 months, if notice of the second qualifying event is properly given to the Plan. This extension may be available to the spouse and any dependent children receiving continuation coverage if the employee or former employee dies, becomes entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both), or gets divorced or legally separated, or if the dependent child stops being eligible under the Plan as a dependent child, but only if the event would have caused the spouse or dependent child to lose coverage under the Plan had the first qualifying event not occurred.

COBRA Premium Requirements

You, or your dependents, will be required to pay 102% of the full cost of the continuation coverage under the provisions of COBRA. You will be billed for the required premium on a regular basis. COBRA premiums are indicated at the end of the Medical Plan section.

Termination of Coverage Under COBRA

Continuation coverage will end when any of the following events occur:

- The Benefits Office is notified by you or your dependent to discontinue coverage.
- 18 months after continuation coverage begins (if coverage was continued due to termination or resignation of the employee).
- 29 months after continuation coverage begins (if coverage was continued due to disability).
- 36 months after continuation coverage begins (if coverage was continued because of death of the employee, divorce, legal separation or loss of dependent status).
- The individual becomes eligible for Medicare after the date of the COBRA election.
- An individual becomes covered under another group plan, unless a pre-existing condition prevents you or your dependent from being covered by the other plan.
- For a spouse or dependent child: If the Benefits Office is not notified within 31 days of the date of divorce or legal separation.
- For a dependent child: If the Benefits Office is not notified within 31 days of the date the dependent status ends.
- Payment for continuation coverage is not paid on time.
- The group health care plan is terminated for active employees.