State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan Continuation Coverage Rights Under COBRA

Introduction

You're getting this notice because you recently gained coverage under the State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan (Plan). This notice has important information about your right to COBRA continuation coverage, which is a temporary extension of coverage under the Plan. **This notice explains COBRA continuation coverage, when it may become available to you and your family, and what you need to do to protect your right to get it.** When you become eligible for COBRA, you may also become eligible for other coverage options that may cost less than COBRA continuation coverage.

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 and other members of your family when group health coverage would otherwise end. For more information about your rights and obligations under the Plan and under federal law, you should review the Plan's Summary Plan Description or contact Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi.

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 it would otherwise end because of a life event. This is also called 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're an employee, you'll become a qualified beneficiary if you lose your coverage under the Plan because of the following qualifying events:

- Your hours of employment are reduced; or
- Your employment ends for any reason other than your gross misconduct.

If you're the spouse of an employee, you'll become a qualified beneficiary if you lose your coverage under the Plan because of the following qualifying events:

- 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 of the following qualifying events:

- 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 continuation coverage available?

The Plan will offer COBRA continuation coverage to qualified beneficiaries only after Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi has been notified that a qualifying event has occurred. The employer must notify Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi of the following qualifying events:

- The end of employment or reduction of hours of employment;
- Death of the employee; or
- The employee's becoming entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B or both).

For all 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 your employer within 60 days after the qualifying event occurs. This requires you to notify your employer by completing an *Application for Coverage* form. This form can be obtained from your employer or at the Plan's website, http://knowyourbenefits.dfa.ms.gov.

How is COBRA continuation coverage provided?

Once Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi 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 that generally lasts for 18 months due to employment termination or reduction of hours of work. Certain qualifying events, or a second qualifying event during the initial period of coverage, may permit a beneficiary to receive a maximum of 36 months of coverage.

There are also ways in which this 18-month period of COBRA continuation coverage can be extended:

Disability extension of 18-month period of COBRA continuation coverage

If you or anyone in your family covered under the Plan is determined by Social Security to be disabled and you notify Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi in a timely fashion, you and your entire family may be entitled to get up to an additional 11 months of COBRA continuation coverage, for a 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 COBRA continuation coverage. You must make sure that Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi is provided with a copy of the Social Security Administration's determination letter within 60 days of the

date of the determination and before the end of the 18-month period of COBRA continuation coverage. This notice should be sent to Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, 3545 Lakeland Drive, Jackson, MS 39232.

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

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

Are there other coverage options besides COBRA Continuation Coverage?

Yes. 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.

If you have questions

Questions concerning your Plan or your COBRA continuation coverage rights should be addressed to the contact or contacts identified below. For more information about your rights under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or the Marketplace, visit www.HealthCare.gov.

Keep your Plan informed of address changes

To protect your family's rights, let Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi know about any changes in the addresses of family members. You should also keep a copy, for your records, of any notices you send to Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi.

Plan Contact Information

The Plan Administrator is the State and School Employees Health Insurance Management Board, P. O. Box 24208, Jackson, MS 39225, (601) 359-3411 or (866) 586-2781. COBRA continuation coverage for the Plan is administered by the Claims Administrator, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, 3545 Lakeland Drive, Jackson, MS 39232, (800) 709-7881.