CONTINUATION COVERAGE RIGHTS UNDER COBRA

Introduction
You’re getting this notice because you recently gained coverage under a group health plan (the 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. COBRA (and the description of COBRA coverage contained in this notice) applies only to group health plan benefits and not to any other benefits offered by your employer.

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, your spouse, and dependent children 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 the employer.

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, join a spouse’s group health plan, or to obtain coverage through a public health program (e.g., Medicare or Medicaid). From time to time, governmental programs may be available to you to help you pay monthly premiums or save on 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, and any required notice of that event is properly provided to the employer, 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 and would be entitled to elect COBRA 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 unless the Plan sponsor has chosen to subsidize the cost of 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. Also, if your spouse (the employee) reduces or eliminates your group health coverage in anticipation of a divorce or legal separation, then the divorce or legal separation may be considered a qualifying event for you even if your coverage was reduced or eliminated before the divorce or separation.

Your dependent children will be entitled to elect COBRA if they lose group health 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 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?
When the qualifying event is the end of employment, a reduction in hours of employment, or the death of the employee, the Plan will offer COBRA continuation coverage to qualified beneficiaries. You do not need to notify your employer of any of the events listed in the last sentence.

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 the Plan Administrator within 60 days after the later of (1) the date of the qualifying event; and (2) the date on which the qualified beneficiary loses (or would lose) coverage under the Plan as a result of the qualifying event. You must provide this notice to: Andrea Zunkel, Benefits Coordinator, at 507-222-5989 or azunkel@carleton.edu.

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 and spouses (if the spouse is a qualified beneficiary) may elect COBRA continuation coverage on behalf of all of the qualified beneficiaries, 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. If the employer offers a health Flexible Spending Account, COBRA coverage under a health Flexible Spending Account can last only until the end of the year in which the qualifying event occurred.
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 a qualified beneficiary is determined by Social Security to be disabled and notifies the employer in a timely fashion, all of the qualified beneficiaries in your entire family may be entitled to get up to an additional 11 months of COBRA continuation coverage, for a maximum of 29 months. This extension is available only for qualified beneficiaries who are receiving COBRA coverage because of a qualifying event that was the covered employee’s termination of employment or reduction of hours. The disability would have to have started at some time before the 61st day after the covered employee’s termination of employment or reduction in hours and must last at least until the end of the period of COBRA coverage that would be available without the disability extension (generally 18 months, as described above).

The disability extension is available only if you notify the employer in writing of the Social Security Administration's determination of disability within 60 days after the latest of:

- the date of the Social Security Administration's disability determination;
- the date of the covered employee's termination of employment or reduction of hours; and
- the date on which the qualified beneficiary loses (or would lose) coverage under the terms of the Plan as a result of the covered employee's termination of employment or reduction of hours.

You must also provide this notice within 18 months after the covered employee's termination of employment or reduction of hours in order to be entitled to a disability extension. In providing this notice, you must use the Plan's designated form (you may obtain a copy of this form from the employer at no charge). **If these procedures are not followed or if the notice is not provided to the employer during the 60-day notice period and within 18 months after the covered employee's termination of employment or reduction of hours, THEN THERE WILL BE NO DISABILITY EXTENSION OF COBRA COVERAGE.**

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

If your family experiences another qualifying event while receiving COBRA continuation coverage because of the covered employee’s termination of employment or reduction of hours (including COBRA coverage during a disability extension period as described above), the spouse and dependent children receiving COBRA continuation coverage 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; 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. This extension is not available under the Plan when a covered employee becomes entitled to Medicare after his or her termination of employment or reduction of hours.

**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 individual health insurance carriers, Medicaid, Medicare, 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.
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 Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), including COBRA, 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 or visit www.dol.gov/ebsa (addresses and phone numbers of Regional and District EBSA Offices are available through EBSA’s website).

Keep your plan informed of address changes
To protect your family’s rights, let the Plan Administrator 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 the Plan Administrator.

Plan contact information:
Andrea Zunkel, Benefits Coordinator, at 507-222-5989 or azunkel@carleton.edu.