

It's That Time: Change-in-Status Season

May and June are often busy months for processing change-in-status requests and delivering COBRA notices. This is largely because many graduations and marriages occur at this time of the year. To help reduce potential problems, some employers find it helpful to distribute a seasonal reminder to their workforce. Shown below is a sample reminder. Please feel free to use this sample as a starting point for creating your own reminder notice.

Remember this is only a sample – be sure to check your plan and modify this sample notice accordingly. For example, all of the numbers (e.g., “age 19” and “31 days”) should be checked against plan provisions and revised as needed. Likewise, it is important to check statements regarding when eligibility will end (e.g., “the last day of the month in which he or she loses full-time student status”) and when enrollment will be allowed (“the next open enrollment”).

Important Notice – Please Read Carefully

Warm-Weather Greetings!

Summer is around the corner and so is graduation season. Undoubtedly, many of you will see students move from the academic world into the business world, no longer children protected under a parent's health plan but adults covered by their new employer's benefit plan.



Your plan offers health coverage for unmarried children who are not employed full-time up to age 19 or as long as the child is a full-time student, up to age 24. If you are the proud parent of a graduating college senior, please remember that your graduate's eligibility ends on the last day of the month in which he or she loses full-time student status. Your graduate may be able to continue health coverage pursuant to COBRA, but only if your Benefits Coordinator is notified within 60 days after your graduate's last day of eligibility under the plan. Please contact your Benefits Coordinator for assistance in completing the proper forms. Failure to advise the Benefits Coordinator on a timely basis that your graduate no longer meets the plan's definition of dependent will result in a loss of COBRA rights. Also keep in mind that it is your responsibility to remove children from the plan when they are no longer eligible.



If your premium contribution will be lower once your graduate is no longer on your coverage, it is important to notify your Benefits Coordinator sooner – within 31 days after your graduate's loss of eligibility under the plan. This is because you cannot change your pre-tax contribution amount during the year unless you request a change within 31 days after a change-in-status event such as your graduate's loss of eligibility. Absent a timely election change request, your pre-tax contribution amount will remain unchanged, even after your graduate is dropped from coverage due to loss of eligibility.

This is also the traditional time of year for weddings. If your otherwise-eligible child is getting married, he or she will lose eligibility for plan coverage at the end of the month in which the wedding occurs. Then, the same COBRA and election change issues discussed above in connection with a child's graduation will apply to the child's wedding.

If you are the one getting married, please remember to contact your Benefits Coordinator no later than 31 days after the wedding. If you wait longer to notify the Benefits Coordinator, you will not be able to enroll your new spouse in the plan until the next open enrollment. Similarly, you may not be able to drop your plan coverage if you choose to enroll in your new spouse's plan. In conjunction with your marriage, you may also want to review your beneficiary designations for life insurance or Section 401(k) plan benefits. Forms to change your beneficiary designations may be obtained from your Benefits Coordinator.

Another life-changing event is of course the birth or adoption of a child, and contacting your Benefits Coordinator promptly after the birth or adoption is once again crucial. If you request enrollment for the new child within 31 days, the child will be covered starting on the date of the birth or adoption. If you request enrollment later than 31 days after the birth or adoption, you must wait until the next open enrollment to enroll your child and coverage will not be retroactive.

The summary plan description (SPD) for the plan contains comprehensive definitions of eligible dependents and detailed information about making changes to your benefit elections and reporting COBRA events. In the event of differences between this reminder notice and your SPD, the information in the SPD will control. Please contact your Benefits Coordinator for assistance with any of our benefit programs. Congratulations and best wishes to all who are celebrating special events this spring and summer!

Key Contacts

US Benefits Office Locations

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410 527 1200

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817 335 2115

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239 659 4500

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