

# **COBRA Information Sheet**

## **Faculty**

### **What is COBRA Continuation Coverage?**

COBRA, the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, was enacted in 1985. It mandated that most employers offer continuation of group health care coverage to plan participants and certain family members for 18 or 36 months at group rates where coverage might otherwise end, such as with a voluntary or involuntary separation from employment, a reduction of hours worked, change in dependent child full-time student status, death of an employee, or a divorce. When you elect COBRA, you are electing to be covered under the same State System health and prescription drug coverage that you had as an active employee.

### **How long do I have to decide whether I want to continue my STATE SYSTEM health and prescription drug coverage under COBRA?**

You and your eligible dependents have 60 days from the later of:

1. The effective date of the loss of eligibility (e.g. separation date from employment); or
2. The date of the COBRA notification to elect COBRA. Once you have elected COBRA, you have 45 days from your date of election to make your first COBRA premium payment.

### **Can I also continue my vision, dental and hearing coverage through COBRA?**

Faculty members receive their vision, dental and hearing benefits through the Pennsylvania Faculty Health & Welfare Fund. To elect COBRA to continue these benefits, faculty members must contact the Pennsylvania Faculty Health & Welfare Fund directly at 844-865-1137 or local APSCUF office at (724) 357-3021.

### **When does COBRA coverage become effective?**

If you choose to continue your State System health and prescription drug coverage through COBRA and/or your vision, dental and hearing coverage within the 60 day period described above, and make your first payment within 45 days of your election date, there will be no interruption in coverage as the COBRA coverage is effective the same date that you lost eligibility.

### **How long will COBRA continue?**

The length of your COBRA continuation coverage will depend on the qualifying event which caused the loss of coverage. When the qualifying event is the end of employment, COBRA continuation coverage generally lasts for only up to a total of 18 months. When the qualifying event is the death of an employee, divorce, or a dependent child's losing eligibility as a dependent child, COBRA continuation coverage lasts for a total of 36 months.

### **How much will I pay for my State System health and prescription drug plan through COBRA?**

If you elect to continue the State System health and prescription drug coverage and/or vision, dental and hearing through COBRA, for your health and prescription drug coverage you will pay the full group premium for the type (PPO or HMO) and size (single, two-party or family) of plan enrolled in at the time of loss of coverage plus a 2% administrative fee. The cost for the vision, dental and hearing coverage is also the group rate plus a 2% administrative fee. The monthly costs are listed below. A separate election may be made by each person.

COBRA premiums change annually on July 1 and, if you elect COBRA, you will be notified of these new rates in the COBRA Open Enrollment newsletter which occurs annually in May. Open enrollment is your annual opportunity to change your health plan and/or to add or remove dependents. Outside of Open Enrollment you may only add or remove dependents within 60 days of a qualifying life event such as marriage, divorce, death, birth or adoption of a child.

**How do I elect COBRA?**

ConnectYourCare, the State System's third party administrator for the COBRA program, will be notified that your benefits have ended. ConnectYourCare will then send you a COBRA information packet that will include enrollment forms. This packet will also include instructions on electing COBRA coverage online or by phone. This packet will be sent to the address that IUP has on file for you, therefore, it is important to contact the Office of Human Resources with any address changes.

**Can I pick up my COBRA information packet from the Office of Human Resources?**

No. The COBRA information packet is sent to you by ConnectYourCare. The Office of Human Resources cannot provide you with the COBRA information packet and election forms.

**When will my insurance company show me active for benefits?**

Once ConnectYourCare receives and processes your election and full payment your information will be forwarded to Highmark and/or your HMO if applicable. Highmark and/or your HMO will update your eligibility retroactive to the day your benefits ended.

**What if I need medical services before my coverage is effective?**

You may be required to pay for services out of pocket during your re-enrollment period. If so, you will need to contact Highmark and/or your HMO for reimbursement forms once your coverage is effective.

**What if I choose not to elect COBRA?**

If you do not choose COBRA coverage, your group health insurance will remain terminated.

**What if I still have questions?**

Questions concerning your Plan or your COBRA continuation coverage rights can be directed to the Office of Human Resources, Sutton Hall, Room G-8, (724) 357-2431.

**Office of Human Resources  
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
G-8 Sutton Hall  
1011 South Drive  
Indiana, PA 15705  
(724) 357-2431**