

§ 1373.621. Additional benefits for former employee meeting tenure and age requirements and for employee's spouse or former spouse; Applicability

(a) Except for a specialized health care service plan, every health care service plan contract that is issued, amended, delivered, or renewed in this state on or after January 1, 1999, that provides hospital, medical, or surgical expense coverage under an employer-sponsored group plan for an employer subject to COBRA, as defined in subdivision (e), or an employer group for which the plan is required to offer Cal-COBRA coverage, as defined in subdivision (f), including a carrier providing replacement coverage under Section 1399.63, shall further offer the former employee the opportunity to continue benefits as required under subdivision (b), and shall further offer the

former spouse of an employee or former employee the opportunity to continue benefits as required under subdivision (c).

(b)(1) In the event a former employee who worked for the employer for at least five years prior to the date of termination of employment and who is 60 years of age or older on the date employment ends is entitled to and so elects to continue benefits under COBRA or Cal-COBRA for himself or herself and for any spouse, the employee or spouse may further continue benefits beyond the date coverage under COBRA or Cal-COBRA ends, as set forth in paragraph (2). Except as otherwise specified, continuation coverage shall be under the same benefit terms and conditions as if the continuation coverage under COBRA or Cal-COBRA had remained in force. For the employee or spouse, continuation coverage following the end of COBRA or Cal-COBRA is subject to payment of premiums to the health care service plan. Individuals ineligible for COBRA or Cal-COBRA, or who are eligible but have not elected or exhausted continuation coverage under federal COBRA or Cal-COBRA, are not entitled to continuation coverage under this section. Premiums for continuation coverage under this section shall be billed by, and remitted to, the health care service plan in accordance with subdivision (d). Failure to pay the requisite premiums may result in termination of the continuation coverage in accordance with the applicable provisions in the plan's group subscriber agreement with the former employer.

(2) The employer shall notify the former employee or spouse or both, or the former spouse of the employee or former employee, of the availability of the continuation benefits under this section in accordance with Section 2800.2 of the Labor Code. To continue health care coverage pursuant to this section, the individual shall elect to do so by notifying the plan in writing within 30 calendar days prior to the date continuation coverage under COBRA or Cal-COBRA is scheduled to end. Every health care service plan and specialized health care service plan shall provide to the employer replacing a health care service plan contract issued by the plan, or to the employer's agent or broker representative, within 15 days of any written request, information in possession of the plan reasonably required to administer the requirements of Section 2800.2 of the Labor Code.

(3) The continuation coverage shall end automatically on the earlier of (A) the date the individual reaches age 65, (B) the date the individual is covered under any group health plan not maintained by the employer or any other health plan, regardless of whether that coverage is less valuable, (C) the date the individual becomes entitled to Medicare under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, (D) for a spouse, five years from the date on which continuation coverage under COBRA or Cal-COBRA was scheduled to end for the spouse, or (E) the date on which the employer terminates its group subscriber agreement with the health care service plan and ceases to provide coverage for any active employees through that plan, in which case the health care service plan shall notify the former employee or spouse or both of the right to a conversion plan in accordance with Section 1373.6.

(c)(1) If a former spouse of an employee or former employee was covered as a qualified beneficiary under COBRA or Cal-COBRA, the former spouse may further continue benefits beyond the date coverage under COBRA or Cal-COBRA ends, as set forth in paragraph (2) of subdivision (b). Except as

otherwise specified in this section, continuation coverage shall be under the same benefit terms and conditions as if the continuation coverage under COBRA or Cal-COBRA had remained in force. Continuation coverage following the end of COBRA or Cal-COBRA is subject to payment of premiums to the health care service plan. Premiums for continuation coverage under this section shall be billed by, and remitted to, the health care service plan in accordance with subdivision (d). Failure to pay the requisite premiums may result in termination of the continuation coverage in accordance with the applicable provisions in the plan's group subscriber agreement with the employer or former employer.

(2) The continuation coverage for the former spouse shall end automatically on the earlier of (A) the date the individual reaches 65 years of age, (B) the date the individual is covered under any group health plan not maintained by the employer or any other health plan, regardless of whether that coverage is less valuable, (C) the date the individual becomes entitled to Medicare under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, (D) five years from the date on which continuation coverage under COBRA or Cal-COBRA was scheduled to end for the former spouse, or (E) the date on which the employer or former employer terminates its group subscriber agreement with the health care service plan and ceases to provide coverage for any active employees through that plan.

(d)(1) If the premium charged to the employer for a specific employee or dependent eligible under this section is adjusted for the age of the specific employee, or eligible dependent, on other than a composite basis, the rate for continuation coverage under this section shall not exceed 102 percent of the premium charged by the plan to the employer for an employee of the same age as the former employee electing continuation coverage in the case of an individual who was eligible for COBRA, and 110 percent in the case of an individual who was eligible for Cal-COBRA. If the coverage continued is that of a former spouse, the premium charged shall not exceed 102 percent of the premium charged by the plan to the employer for an employee of the same age as the former spouse selecting continuation coverage in the case of an individual who was eligible for COBRA, and 110 percent in the case of an individual who was eligible for Cal-COBRA.

(2) If the premium charged to the employer for a specific employee or dependent eligible under this section is not adjusted for age of the specific employee, or eligible dependent, then the rate for continuation coverage under this section shall not exceed 213 percent of the applicable current group rate. For purposes of this section, the "applicable current group rate" means the total premiums charged by the health care service plan for coverage for the group, divided by the relevant number of covered persons.

(3) However, in computing the premiums charged to the specific employer group, the health care service plan shall not include consideration of the specific medical care expenditures for beneficiaries receiving continuation coverage pursuant to this section.

(e) For purposes of this section, "COBRA" means Section 4980B of Title 26 of the United States Code, Section 1161 et seq. of Title 29 of the United States Code, and Section 300bb of Title 42 of the United States Code, as added by the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (Public Law 99-272), and as amended.

(f) For purposes of this section, “Cal-COBRA” means the continuation coverage that must be offered pursuant to Article 4.5 (commencing with Section 1366.20), or Article 1.7 (commencing with Section 10128.50) of Chapter 1 of Part 2 of Division 2 of the Insurance Code.

(g) For the purposes of this section, “former spouse” means either an individual who is divorced from an employee or former employee or an individual who was married to an employee or former employee at the time of the death of the employee or former employee.

(h) Every plan evidence of coverage that is issued, amended, or renewed after July 1, 1999, shall contain a description of the provisions and eligibility requirements for the continuation coverage offered pursuant to this section.

(i) This section does not apply to any individual who is not eligible for its continuation coverage prior to January 1, 2005.

HISTORY:

Added Stats 1997 ch 665 § 3 (SB 719).
Amended Stats 1998 ch 107 § 12 (AB 112),

effective July 6, 1998, operative January 1, 1999; Stats 2004 ch 64 § 1 (AB 254); Stats 2013 ch 441 § 7 (AB 1180), effective October 1, 2013.