

Pacific Cheese

General Notice of COBRA Continuation Coverage Rights | California

Introduction

You are 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 receive 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 the Plan Administrator.

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 coverage would otherwise end because of a life event known as 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);

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- The parents become divorced or legally separated; or
- The child stops being eligible for coverage under the plan as a “dependent child.”

*** The interaction of Medicare and receipt of COBRA benefits is a complex area of the law. Please consult with your legal counsel or benefits specialist to ensure proper compliance with applicable legal requirements.**

When is COBRA Continuation Coverage Available?

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

- The end of employment or reduction of hours of employment;
- Death of the employee;
- The Commencement of a proceeding in bankruptcy with respect to the employer; or
- The employee's becoming entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both).

You Must Give Notice of Some Qualifying Events

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 qualifying event occurs.

You must provide this notice to:

Pacific Cheese
Human Resource Department,
21090 Cabot Boulevard
Hayward, CA 94545
Attn: Cindy Tran
Email: ctran@pacificcheese.com
Ph. 510-780-8830

Notice of a qualifying event must include: The name of the person(s) that will be losing coverage, the qualifying event that will cause the loss of coverage, and the date on which the qualifying event occurs. You should also provide documentation of the qualifying event, such as a photocopy of a divorce order showing the date the divorce was finalized. If you have any questions concerning what is required, contact the Plan Administrator.

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 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.

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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 the Plan Administrator 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 total 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 continuation coverage.

The Plan has provisions that require you to give notice of a disability determination, including time frames and procedures. They are as follows:

You must notify the COBRA Administrator within the original 18-month COBRA continuation period **and** within 60 days of the later of: a) the date of the SSA's determination of disability, b) the date on which the qualifying event occurs, c) the date on which the qualified beneficiary would lose coverage under the plan, or d) the date on which the qualified beneficiary is informed, through the furnishing of the Summary Plan Description or the General Notice, of their responsibility to notify the COBRA Administrator.

If the SSA determines that a COBRA participant is no longer disabled, the qualified beneficiary is required to notify the COBRA Administrator within 30 days of the date of the determination.

Notice of an SSA disability determination should be given to:

The Advantage Group
43471 Ridge Park Drive, Suite B
Temecula, CA 92590
(951) 506-1660 Ext. 205
(951) 506-1661 Fax

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

If your family experiences another qualifying event while receiving 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), or 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.

Extended Cal-COBRA Coverage for California Employees

The Plan must offer any qualified beneficiary who is entitled to less than 36 months of continuation coverage under COBRA and has exhausted such coverage the opportunity to extend coverage under Cal-COBRA to a total of 36 months from the date the qualified beneficiary's continuation coverage began. A qualified beneficiary electing such further continuation coverage must pay to the group plan, on or before the due date of each payment but not more frequently than on a monthly basis, not more than 110 percent of the applicable rate charged for a covered employee or, in the case of dependent coverage, not more than 110 percent of the applicable rate charged to a similarly situated individual under the group benefit plan being continued under the group contract. In the case of a qualified beneficiary who is determined to be disabled by SSA (see "Disability" above), the qualified beneficiary shall be required to pay to the group health plan an amount no greater than 150 percent of the group rate after the first 18 months of continuation coverage.

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

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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 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.) For more information about the Marketplace, visit www.HealthCare.gov.

Keep Your Plan Informed of Address Changes

In order to protect your family's rights, you should keep the Plan Administrator informed of 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

For information about the Plan or about COBRA continuation coverage, contact:

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21090 Cabot Boulevard
Hayward, CA 94545
Attn: Cindy Tran
Email: ctran@pacificcheese.com
Ph. 510-780-8830