

## ***Your Continuation Coverage Rights under COBRA***

### **What is continuation coverage?**

Federal law requires that most group health plans (including this Plan) give employees and their families the opportunity to continue their health care coverage when there is a “qualifying event” that would result in a loss of coverage under an employer’s plan. Depending on the type of qualifying event, “qualified beneficiaries” can include the employee (or retired employee) covered under the group health plan, the covered employee’s spouse, and the dependent children of the covered employee.

Continuation coverage is the same coverage that the Plan gives to other participants or beneficiaries under the Plan who are not receiving continuation coverage. Each qualified beneficiary who elects continuation coverage will have the same rights under the Plan as other participants or beneficiaries covered under the Plan, including open enrollment and special enrollment rights.

COBRA (and the description of COBRA coverage contained in this notice) applies only to the group health benefits offered under the Plan and not to any other benefits offered under the Plan.

The Plan provides no greater COBRA rights than what COBRA requires — nothing in this notice is intended to expand your rights beyond COBRA requirements.

### **How long will continuation coverage last?**

In the case of a loss of coverage due to end of employment or reduction in hours of employment, coverage generally may be continued only for up to a total of 18 months. In the case of losses of coverage due to an employee’s death, divorce or legal separation, the employee’s becoming entitled to Medicare benefits or a dependent child ceasing to be a dependent under the terms of the plan, coverage may be continued for up to a total of 36 months. When the qualifying event is the end of employment or reduction of the employee's hours of employment, and the employee became entitled to Medicare benefits less than 18 months before the qualifying event, COBRA continuation coverage for qualified beneficiaries other than the employee lasts until 36 months after the date of Medicare entitlement. This notice shows the maximum period of continuation coverage available to the qualified beneficiaries.

### **Continuation coverage will be terminated before the end of the maximum period if:**

- any required premium is not paid in full on time,
- a qualified beneficiary first becomes covered, after electing continuation coverage, under another group health plan that does not impose any preexisting condition exclusion for a preexisting condition of the qualified beneficiary,
- a qualified beneficiary first becomes entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both) after electing continuation coverage, or
- the employer ceases to provide any group health plan for its employees.

Continuation coverage may also be terminated for any reason the Plan would terminate coverage of participant or beneficiary not receiving continuation coverage (such as fraud).

### **How can you extend the length of COBRA continuation coverage?**

If you elect continuation coverage, an extension of the maximum period of coverage may be available if a qualified beneficiary is disabled or a second qualifying event occurs. You must notify

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BenefitHelp Solutions of a disability or a second qualifying event in order to extend the period of continuation coverage. Failure to provide notice of a disability or second qualifying event may affect the right to extend the period of continuation coverage.

**Disability**

An 11-month extension of coverage may be available if any of the qualified beneficiaries is determined under the Social Security Act (SSA) to be disabled. The disability has to have started at some time on or before the 60th day of COBRA continuation coverage and must last at least until the end of the 18-month period of continuation coverage. Each qualified beneficiary who has elected continuation coverage will be entitled to the 11-month disability extension if one of them qualifies.

The disability extension is available only if you notify BenefitHelp Solutions in writing of the Social Security Administration's determination of disability within the 18-month period of continuation of coverage.

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 follow the notice procedures specified in the box at the end of this notice entitled "Notice Procedures." If these procedures are not followed, or if the notice is not provided to BenefitHelp Solutions 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.

If the qualified beneficiary is determined by the Social Security Administration to no longer be disabled, you must notify BenefitHelp Solutions of that fact within 30 days after the Social Security Administration's determination. In providing this notice, you must follow the notice procedures specified in the box at the end of this notice entitled "Notice Procedures."

**Second Qualifying Event**

An 18-month extension of coverage will be available to spouses and dependent children who elect continuation coverage if a second qualifying event occurs during the first 18 months of continuation coverage. The maximum amount of continuation coverage available when a second qualifying event occurs is 36 months. Such second qualifying events may include the death of a covered employee, divorce or legal separation from the covered employee, the covered employee's becoming entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both), or a dependent child's ceasing to be eligible for coverage as a dependent under the Plan. These events can be a second qualifying event only if they would have caused the qualified beneficiary to lose coverage under the Plan if the first qualifying event had not occurred. You must notify the Plan within 60 days after a second qualifying event occurs if you want to extend your continuation coverage.

**How can you elect COBRA continuation coverage?**

To elect continuation coverage, you must complete the Election Form and furnish it according to the directions on the form. Each qualified beneficiary has a separate right to elect continuation coverage. For example, the employee's spouse may elect continuation coverage even if the employee does not. Continuation coverage may be elected for only one, several, or for all dependent children who are qualified beneficiaries. A parent may elect to continue coverage on behalf of any dependent children. The employee or the employee's spouse can elect continuation coverage on behalf of all of the qualified beneficiaries.

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If your employer maintains separate plans for each health benefit component of the Plan, you may elect COBRA coverage for any one or more of the Plan components under which you were covered on the day before the qualifying event. For example, if you had the option to choose medical and/or dental and/or vision coverage, you will have the option to continue any one of the plans that you were covered under on the day before the qualifying event. However, if your employer has one health plan that covers medical, dental and vision, you must elect or decline continuation coverage for the plan as a whole.

If the health plan you are enrolled in at the time of your qualifying event is regional specific (such as a managed care plan), and you move outside the service area, and the employer has a health plan available in the area you have moved to, you may elect coverage under the other health plan. This also applies if you move after electing COBRA coverage. It is your responsibility to inform the employer of your move.

Qualified beneficiaries who are entitled to elect COBRA may do so even if they have other group health plan coverage or are entitled to Medicare benefits on or before the date on which COBRA is elected. Medicare becomes the primary payer for an age-based or disability-based Medicare beneficiary who also has COBRA coverage. If Medicare entitlement is based on ESRD, then Medicare is the secondary payer for the first 30 months of the Medicare entitlement. Carriers may assume enrollment in Medicare and estimate claims as if Medicare is the primary payer. If you haven't enrolled in Medicare Part B and are eligible, contact the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to discuss your options. However, a qualified beneficiary's COBRA coverage will terminate automatically if, after electing COBRA, he or she becomes entitled to Medicare benefits or becomes covered under other group health plan coverage.

In considering whether to elect continuation coverage, you should take into account that a failure to continue your group health coverage will affect your future rights under federal law. First, you can lose the right to avoid having preexisting condition exclusions applied to you by other group health plans if you have a 63-day gap in health coverage, and election of continuation coverage may help prevent such a gap. Second, you will lose the guaranteed right to purchase individual health coverage that does not impose a preexisting condition exclusion if you do not elect continuation coverage for the maximum time available to you. Finally, you should take into account that you have special enrollment rights under federal law. You have the right to request special enrollment in another group health plan for which you are otherwise eligible (such as a plan sponsored by your spouse's employer) within 30 days after your group health coverage ends because of the qualifying event listed above. You will also have the same special enrollment right at the end of continuation coverage if you get continuation coverage for the maximum time available to you.

**How much does COBRA continuation coverage cost?**

Generally, each qualified beneficiary may be required to pay the entire cost of continuation coverage. The amount a qualified beneficiary may be required to pay may not exceed 102 percent (or, in the case of an extension of continuation coverage due to a disability, 150 percent) of the cost to the group health plan (including both employer and employee contributions) for coverage of a similarly situated plan participant or beneficiary who is not receiving continuation coverage. The required payment for each continuation coverage period for each option is described in this notice.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) reduces the COBRA premium in some cases. The premium reduction is available to certain individuals who experience a qualifying

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event that is an involuntary termination of employment during the period beginning with September 1, 2008 and ending with December 31, 2009. If you qualify for the premium reduction, you need only pay 35 percent of the COBRA premium otherwise due to the plan. This premium reduction is available for up to nine months. If your COBRA continuation coverage lasts for more than nine months, you will have to pay the full amount to continue your COBRA continuation coverage. See the attached "Summary of the COBRA Premium Reduction Provisions under ARRA" for more details, restrictions, and obligations as well as the form necessary to establish eligibility.

The Trade Act of 2002 created a tax credit for certain individuals who become eligible for trade adjustment assistance and for certain retired employees who are receiving pension payments from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). Under the tax provisions, eligible individuals can either take a tax credit or get advance payment of 65% of premiums paid for qualified health insurance, including continuation coverage. ARRA made several amendments to these provisions, including an increase in the amount of the credit to 80% of premiums for coverage before January 1, 2011 and temporary extensions of the maximum period of COBRA continuation coverage for PBGC recipients (covered employees who have a no forfeitable right to a benefit any portion of which is to be paid by the PBGC) and TAA-eligible individuals.

If you have questions about these provisions, you may call the Health Coverage Tax Credit Customer Contact Center toll-free at 1-866-628-4282. TTD/TTY callers may call toll-free at 1-866-626-4282. More information about the Trade Act is also available at [www.doleta.gov/tradeact](http://www.doleta.gov/tradeact).

### **Electing COBRA under the Health FSA component**

If you are currently participating in a Health FSA, and there is a positive balance of funds in your Health FSA on the termination date, you, your covered spouse and qualified beneficiaries covered under the Health FSA component are entitled to continue coverage in the Health FSA plan. COBRA coverage will consist of the Health FSA coverage in force at the time of the qualifying event (i.e., the elected annual limit reduced by expenses reimbursed up to the time of the qualifying event). **The use-it-or-lose-it rule will continue to apply, so any unused amounts will be forfeited at the end of the plan year, and COBRA coverage will terminate at the end of the plan year.** All qualified beneficiaries who were covered under the Health FSA component of the Plan will be covered together for Health FSA COBRA coverage.

Please note: FSA is not an eligible benefit under the federal stimulus program.

### **When and how must payment for COBRA continuation coverage be made?**

#### **First payment for continuation coverage**

If you elect continuation coverage, you do not have to send any payment with the Election Form. However, you must make your first payment for continuation coverage no later than 45 days after the date of your election. (This is the date the Election Notice is post-marked, if mailed.) If you make your first payment for continuation coverage in full later than 45 days after the date of your election, you will lose all continuation coverage rights under the Plan. Your first payment must cover the cost of COBRA coverage from the time your coverage under the Plan would have otherwise terminated up through the end of the month before the month in which you make your first payment. (For example, Sue's employment terminates on September 30, and she loses coverage on

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September 30. Sue elects COBRA on November 15. Her initial premium payment equals the premiums for October and November and is due on or before December 30, the 45th day after the date of her COBRA election.) You are responsible for making sure that the amount of your first payment is correct. You may contact BHS to confirm the correct amount of your first payment.

Claims for reimbursement will not be processed and paid until you have elected COBRA and made the first payment for it.

### **Periodic payments for continuation coverage**

After you make your first payment for continuation coverage, you will be required to make periodic payments for each subsequent coverage period. The amount due for each coverage period for each qualified beneficiary is shown in this notice. The periodic payments can be made on a monthly basis. Under the Plan, each of these periodic payments for continuation coverage is due on the first day of each month for that coverage period. If you make a periodic payment on or before the first day of the coverage period to which it applies, your coverage under the Plan will continue for that coverage period without any break. As a courtesy, BHS will send monthly notices of payments due for these coverage periods if you elect to pay your premium via check. (If you do not receive a bill, it is still your responsibility to pay your COBRA premiums on time).

### **Grace periods for periodic payments**

Although periodic payments are due on the dates shown above, you will be given a grace period of 30 days after the first day of the coverage period to make each periodic payment. Your continuation coverage will be provided for each coverage period as long as payment for that coverage period is made before the end of the grace period for that payment. However, if you pay a periodic payment later than the first day of the coverage period to which it applies, but before the end of the grace period for the coverage period, your coverage under the Plan will be suspended as of the first day of the coverage period and then retroactively reinstated (going back to the first day of the coverage period) when the periodic payment is received. This means that any claim you submit for benefits while your coverage is suspended may be denied and may have to be resubmitted once your coverage is reinstated.

If you fail to make a periodic payment before the end of the grace period for that coverage period, you will lose all rights to continuation coverage under the Plan.

Send your first payment and all periodic payments for continuation coverage to:

BenefitHelp Solutions, Inc.

P.O. Box 67240, Portland, Oregon 97268-1240

Phone: 800-556-3137 or 503-765-3581

Fax: 503-765-3453

Web: [www.benefithelpolutions.com](http://www.benefithelpolutions.com)

### **Important Information**

Continuation of Coverage for Spouses Age 55 of Older: Under Oregon law (ORS 743.600-743.602), if you are a spouse who is age 55 or older and your eligibility for group health plan coverage has ended due to legal separation, termination of marriage or the member's death, you may be entitled to continue your plan coverage (including coverage for dependent children) until one of the following events occur:

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- the date you become covered under any other group health plan, regardless if the other plan has an exclusion or limitation period;
- the date you become eligible for federal Medicare coverage, regardless if you enroll in Medicare;
- the last day of the month that premiums were paid to us in the event of non-payment of premiums;
- the date the Plan terminates or the date the employer terminates participation under this Plan;
- a Dependent child may remain on the plan with you until he/she no longer meets the plan's definition of a dependent child.

Oregon continued coverage is available only if you (spouse age 55 or older) notify the Plan Administrator in writing of the legal separation, termination of marriage or your spouse's death within:

- thirty days of the date of the member's death;
- sixty days of the date of legal separation; or
- sixty days of the date of entry of the divorce decree.

You have 60 days from the date BHS sent this COBRA Enrollment Notice to you to exercise your Oregon continuation coverage rights.

**For more information**

This notice does not fully describe continuation coverage or other rights under the Plan. More information about continuation coverage and your rights under the Plan is available in your summary plan description or from the Plan Administrator.

If you have any questions concerning the information in this notice, your rights to coverage contact: BenefitHelp Solutions, Inc.

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Fax: 503-765-3453

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State and local government employees should contact HHS-CMS at [www.cms.hhs.gov/COBRAContinuationofCov/](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/COBRAContinuationofCov/) or [NewCobraRights@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:NewCobraRights@cms.hhs.gov).

**Keep Your Plan Informed of Address and Plan Eligibility Changes**

In order to protect your and your family's rights, you should keep BenefitHelp Solutions informed of any changes in your address and the addresses of family members. You should also keep a copy, for your records, of any notices you send to BenefitHelp Solutions.

If you become eligible for coverage under another group health plan or Medicare, you must notify BenefitHelp Solutions of such eligibility in writing, even if you do not elect such other coverage. Failure to notify BenefitHelp Solutions of eligibility for such other coverage may subject you to a federal penalty equal to 110% of the premium assistance provided to you after the date you became eligible for such other coverage.

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Please Note: Although BenefitHelp Solutions, Inc. has contracted with PEBB to provide various COBRA administrative services; BenefitHelp Solutions, Inc. is not the Plan Administrator. The Plan Administrator, PEBB, is the sponsor of the Plan.

### ***Summary of the COBRA Premium Reduction Provisions under ARRA***

President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) on February 17, 2009. The law gives "Assistance Eligible Individuals" the right to pay reduced COBRA premiums for periods of coverage beginning on or after February 17, 2009 and can last up to 9 months.

To be considered an "Assistance Eligible Individual" and get reduced premiums, you:

- MUST be eligible for continuation coverage at any time during the period from September 1, 2008 through December 31, 2009 and elect the coverage;
- MUST have a continuation coverage election opportunity related to an involuntary termination of employment that occurred at some time from September 1, 2008 through December 31, 2009;
- MUST NOT be eligible for Medicare; AND
- MUST NOT be eligible for coverage under any other group health plan, such as a plan sponsored by a successor employer or a spouse's employer.\*

Individuals who experienced a qualifying event as the result of an involuntary termination of employment at any time on or after September 1, 2008 and were offered, but did not elect, continuation coverage OR who elected continuation coverage and subsequently discontinued it may have the right to an additional 60-day election period.

#### **IMPORTANT**

- If, after you elect COBRA and while you are paying the reduced premium, you become eligible for other group health plan coverage or Medicare you MUST notify the plan in writing. If you do not, you may be subject to a tax penalty.
- Electing the premium reduction disqualifies you for the Health Coverage Tax Credit. If you are eligible for the Health Coverage Tax Credit, which could be more valuable than the premium reduction, you will have received a notification from the IRS.
- The amount of the premium reduction is recaptured for certain high income individuals. If the amount you earn for the year is more than \$125,000 (or \$250,000 for married couples filing a joint federal income tax return) all or part of the premium reduction may be recaptured by an increase in your income tax liability for the year. If you think that your income may exceed the amounts above, you may wish to consider waiving your right to the premium reduction. For more information, consult your tax preparer or visit the IRS webpage on ARRA at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

For general information regarding your plan's COBRA coverage, you can contact BenefitHelp Solutions, Inc.

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\* Generally, this does not include coverage for only dental, vision, counseling, or referral services; coverage under a health flexible spending arrangement; or treatment that is furnished in an on-site medical facility maintained by the employer.

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P.O. Box 67240, Portland, Oregon 97268-1240 • Phone: 800-556-3137 or 503-765-3581 • Fax: 503-765-3453

For specific information related to your plan's administration of the ARRA Premium Reduction or to notify the plan of your ineligibility to continue paying reduced premiums, contact BenefitHelp Solutions at 503-765-3581 or 800-556-3137 or via mail at P.O. Box 67240, Portland, OR 97268-1240

If you are denied status as an "Assistance Eligible Individual" you may have the right to have the denial reviewed. For more information regarding reviews or for general information about the ARRA Premium Reduction State and local government employees should contact HHS-CMS at: [www.cms.hhs.gov/COBRAContinuationofCov/](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/COBRAContinuationofCov/) or [NewCobraRights@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:NewCobraRights@cms.hhs.gov)..

### ***Special Enrollment Rights***

If you are declining enrollment for yourself or your dependents (including your spouse or domestic partner) because of other health insurance or group health plan coverage, you may be able to enroll yourself and your dependents in a PEBB plan if you or your dependents lose eligibility for that other coverage (or if the employer stops contributing toward your or your dependents' other coverage). However, you must request enrollment within 60 days after your or your dependents' other coverage ends (or after the employer stops contributing toward the other coverage).

In addition, if you have a new dependent as a result of marriage, birth, adoption, or placement for adoption, you may be able to enroll yourself and your dependents. However, you must request enrollment within 60 days after the marriage, birth, adoption, or placement for adoption. To request special enrollment or obtain more information, contact PEBB at (503) 373-1102, or e-mail [inquiries.pebb@state.or.us](mailto:inquiries.pebb@state.or.us).