

62A.17 TERMINATION OF OR LAYOFF FROM EMPLOYMENT; CONTINUATION AND CONVERSION RIGHTS.

Subdivision 1. **Continuation of coverage.** Every group insurance policy, group subscriber contract, and health care plan included within the provisions of section 62A.16, except policies, contracts, or health care plans covering employees of an agency of the federal government, shall contain a provision which permits every covered employee who is voluntarily or involuntarily terminated or laid off from employment, if the policy, contract, or health care plan remains in force for active employees of the employer, to elect to continue the coverage for the employee and dependents.

An employee shall be considered to be laid off from employment if there is a reduction in hours to the point where the employee is no longer eligible under the policy, contract, or health care plan. Termination shall not include discharge for gross misconduct.

Upon request by the terminated or laid off employee, a health carrier must provide the instructions necessary to enable the employee to elect continuation of coverage.

Subd. 2. **Responsibility of employee.** Every covered employee electing to continue coverage shall pay the former employer, on a monthly basis, the cost of the continued coverage. The policy, contract, or plan must require the group policyholder or contract holder to, upon request, provide the employee with written verification from the insurer of the cost of this coverage promptly at the time of eligibility for this coverage and at any time during the continuation period. If the policy, contract, or health care plan is administered by a trust, every covered employee electing to continue coverage shall pay the trust the cost of continued coverage according to the eligibility rules established by the trust. In no event shall the amount of premium charged exceed 102 percent of the cost to the plan for such period of coverage for similarly situated employees with respect to whom neither termination nor layoff has occurred, without regard to whether such cost is paid by the employer or employee. The employee shall be eligible to continue the coverage until the employee becomes covered under another group health plan, or for a period of 18 months after the termination of or lay off from employment, whichever is shorter. If the employee becomes covered under another group policy, contract, or health plan and the new group policy, contract, or health plan contains any preexisting condition limitations, the employee may, subject to the 18-month maximum continuation limit, continue coverage with the former employer until the preexisting condition limitations have been satisfied. The new policy, contract, or health plan is primary except as to the preexisting condition. In the case of a newborn child who is a dependent of the employee, the new policy, contract, or health plan is primary upon the date of birth of the child, regardless of which policy, contract, or health plan coverage is deemed primary for the mother of the child.

Subd. 3. [Repealed by amendment, 1987 c 337 s 50]

Subd. 4. **Responsibility of employer.** After timely receipt of the monthly payment from a covered employee, if the employer, or the trustee, if the policy, contract, or health care plan is administered by a trust, fails to make the payment to the insurer, nonprofit health service plan corporation, or health maintenance organization, with the result that the employee's coverage is terminated, the employer or trust shall become liable for the employee's coverage to the same extent as the insurer, nonprofit health service plan corporation, or health maintenance organization would be if the coverage were still in effect.

In the case of a policy, contract or plan administered by a trust, the employer must notify the trustee within 30 days of the termination or layoff of a covered employee of the name and last known address of the employee.

If the employer or trust fails to notify a covered employee, the employer or trust shall continue to remain liable for the employee's coverage to the same extent as the insurer would be if the coverage were still in effect.

Subd. 5. **Notice of options.** Upon the termination of or lay off from employment of an eligible employee, the employer shall inform the employee within ten days after termination or lay off of:

- (a) the right to elect to continue the coverage;
- (b) the amount the employee must pay monthly to the employer to retain the coverage;
- (c) the manner in which and the office of the employer to which the payment to the employer must be made; and
- (d) the time by which the payments to the employer must be made to retain coverage.

If the policy, contract, or health care plan is administered by a trust, the employer is relieved of the obligation imposed by clauses (a) to (d). The trust shall inform the employee of the information required by clauses (a) to (d).

The employee shall have 60 days within which to elect coverage. The 60-day period shall begin to run on the date plan coverage would otherwise terminate or on the date upon which notice of the right to coverage is received, whichever is later.

Notice must be in writing and sent by first class mail to the employee's last known address which the employee has provided the employer or trust.

A notice in substantially the following form shall be sufficient: "As a terminated or laid off employee, the law authorizes you to maintain your group medical insurance for a period of up to 18 months. To do so you must notify your former employer within 60 days of your receipt of this

notice that you intend to retain this coverage and must make a monthly payment of \$..... to at by the of each month."

Subd. 6. Conversion to individual policy. A group insurance policy that provides posttermination or layoff coverage as required by this section shall also include a provision allowing a covered employee, surviving spouse, or dependent at the expiration of the posttermination or layoff coverage provided by subdivision 2 to obtain from the insurer offering the group policy or group subscriber contract, at the employee's, spouse's, or dependent's option and expense, without further evidence of insurability and without interruption of coverage, an individual policy of insurance or an individual subscriber contract providing at least the minimum benefits of a qualified plan as prescribed by section 62E.06 and the option of a number three qualified plan, a number two qualified plan, and a number one qualified plan as provided by section 62E.06, subdivisions 1 to 3, provided application is made to the insurer within 30 days following notice of the expiration of the continued coverage and upon payment of the appropriate premium. The required conversion contract must treat pregnancy the same as any other covered illness under the conversion contract. A health maintenance contract issued by a health maintenance organization that provides posttermination or layoff coverage as required by this section shall also include a provision allowing a former employee, surviving spouse, or dependent at the expiration of the posttermination or layoff coverage provided in subdivision 2 to obtain from the health maintenance organization, at the former employee's, spouse's, or dependent's option and expense, without further evidence of insurability and without interruption of coverage, an individual health maintenance contract. Effective January 1, 1985, enrollees who have become nonresidents of the health maintenance organization's service area shall be given the option, to be arranged by the health maintenance organization, of a number three qualified plan, a number two qualified plan, or a number one qualified plan as provided by section 62E.06, subdivisions 1 to 3. This option shall be made available at the enrollee's expense, without further evidence of insurability and without interruption of coverage.

A policy providing reduced benefits at a reduced premium rate may be accepted by the employee, the spouse, or a dependent in lieu of the optional coverage otherwise required by this subdivision.

The individual policy or contract shall be renewable at the option of the individual as long as the individual is not covered under another qualified plan as defined in section 62E.02, subdivision 4. Any revisions in the table of rate for the individual policy shall apply to the covered person's original age at entry and shall apply equally to all similar policies issued by the insurer.

History: *1974 c 101 s 2; 1975 c 100 s 1-3; 1976 c 142 s 2,3; 1977 c 409 s 2; 1983 c 44 s 1,2; 1983 c 263 s 9; 1984 c 464 s 7; 1Sp1985 c 10 s 60; 1986 c 444; 1987 c 337 s 50; 1988 c 434 s 2; 1989 c 330 s 17; 1990 c 403 s 1; 1992 c 564 art 4 s 6; 2001 c 215 s 9*