



Senate Bill No. 4

Public Act No. 03-77

AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXTENSION OF GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR INDIVIDUALS AGE SIXTY-TWO AND OVER.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 38a-554 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2003*):

A group comprehensive health care plan shall contain the minimum standard benefits prescribed in section 38a-553 and shall also conform in substance to the requirements of this section.

(a) The plan shall be one under which the individuals eligible to be covered include: (1) Each eligible employee; (2) the spouse of each eligible employee, who shall be considered a dependent for the purposes of this section; and (3) dependent unmarried children, who are under the age of nineteen or are full-time students under the age of twenty-three at an accredited institution of higher learning.

(b) The plan shall provide the option to continue coverage under each of the following circumstances until the individual is eligible for other group insurance, except as provided in subdivisions (3) and (4) of this subsection: (1) Notwithstanding any provision of this section, upon layoff, reduction of hours, leave of absence, or termination of employment, other than as a result of death of the employee or as a result of such employee's "gross misconduct" as that term is used in 29 USC 1163(2), continuation of coverage for such employee and such employee's covered dependents for the periods set forth for such event under federal extension requirements established by the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (P. L. 99-272), as amended from time to time, (COBRA), except that if such reduction of hours, leave of absence or termination of employment results from an employee's eligibility to receive Social Security income, continuation of coverage for such employee and such employee's covered dependents until midnight of the day preceding such person's eligibility for benefits under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act; (2) upon the death of the employee, continuation of coverage for the covered dependents of such employee for the periods set forth for such event under federal extension requirements established by the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (P. L. 99-272), as amended from time to time, (COBRA); (3) regardless of the employee's or dependent's eligibility for other group

insurance, during an employee's absence due to illness or injury, continuation of coverage for such employee and such employee's covered dependents during continuance of such illness or injury or for up to twelve months from the beginning of such absence; (4) regardless of an individual's eligibility for other group insurance, upon termination of the group plan, coverage for covered individuals who were totally disabled on the date of termination shall be continued without premium payment during the continuance of such disability for a period of twelve calendar months following the calendar month in which the plan was terminated, provided claim is submitted for coverage within one year of the termination of the plan; (5) the coverage of any covered individual shall terminate: (A) As to a child, the plan shall provide the option for said child to continue coverage for the longer of the following periods: (i) At the end of the month following the month in which the child marries, ceases to be dependent on the employee or attains the age of nineteen, whichever occurs first, except that if the child is a full-time student at an accredited institution, the coverage may be continued while the child remains unmarried and a full-time student, but not beyond the month following the month in which the child attains the age of twenty-three. If on the date specified for termination of coverage on a dependent child, the child is unmarried and incapable of self-sustaining employment by reason of mental or physical handicap and chiefly dependent upon the employee for support and maintenance, the coverage on such child shall continue while the plan remains in force and the child remains in such condition, provided proof of such handicap is received by the carrier within thirty-one days of the date on which the child's coverage would have terminated in the absence of such incapacity. The carrier may require subsequent proof of the child's continued incapacity and dependency but not more often than once a year thereafter, or (ii) for the periods set forth for such child under federal extension requirements established by the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (P. L. 99-272), as amended from time to time, (COBRA); (B) as to the employee's spouse, at the end of the month following the month in which a divorce, court-ordered annulment or legal separation is obtained, whichever is earlier, except that the plan shall provide the option for said spouse to continue coverage for the periods set forth for such events under federal extension requirements established by the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (P. L. 99-272), as amended from time to time, (COBRA); and (C) as to the employee or dependent who is sixty-five years of age or older, as of midnight of the day preceding such person's eligibility for benefits under Title XVIII of the federal Social Security Act; (6) as to any other event listed as a "qualifying event" in 29 USC 1163, as amended from time to time, continuation of coverage for such periods set forth for such event in 29 USC 1162, as amended from time to time, provided such plan may require the individual whose coverage is to be continued to pay up to the percentage of the applicable premium as specified for such event in 29 USC 1162, as amended from time to time. Any continuation of coverage required by this section except subdivision (4) or (6) of this subsection may be subject to the requirement, on the part of the individual whose coverage is to be continued, that such individual contribute that portion of the premium the individual would have been required to contribute had the employee remained an active covered employee, except that the individual may be required to pay up to one hundred two per cent of the entire premium at the group rate if coverage is continued in accordance with subdivision (1), (2) or (5) of this subsection. The employer shall not be legally obligated by sections 38a-505, 38a-546 and 38a-551 to 38a-559, inclusive, to pay such premium if not paid timely by the employee.

(c) The commissioner shall adopt regulations, in accordance with chapter 54, concerning coordination of benefits between the plan and other health insurance plans.

(d) The plan shall make available to Connecticut residents, in addition to any other conversion privilege available, a conversion privilege under which coverage shall be available immediately upon termination of coverage under the group plan. The terms and benefits offered under the conversion benefits shall be at least equal to the terms and benefits of an individual comprehensive health care plan.

Approved June 3, 2003