



## COBRA & Medicare Enrollment

### ■ About COBRA

If you're losing group health plan coverage that is based on your or your spouse's current employment, it's likely that you will be eligible to continue the same coverage under the federal law known as COBRA. For more information about COBRA or other continuation options, contact your employer or visit:

<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/health-plans/cobra>.

### ■ What Happens To My COBRA Coverage If I Enroll In Medicare?

- Enrolling in Medicare after electing COBRA continuation coverage will result in the termination of your COBRA coverage.
- Enrolling in Medicare before you elect COBRA continuation coverage will enable you to remain on the group health plan for the maximum duration that is allowed.

## ■ Am I Required To Enroll In Medicare While On COBRA?

Although enrolling in Medicare while on COBRA is not required, it is generally considered to be a good idea for the following reasons.

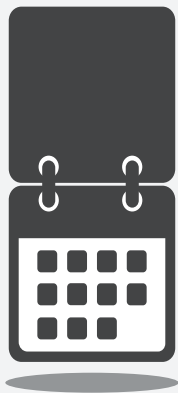
### 1. REDUCED GROUP COVERAGE

Your group health plan benefits under COBRA may be reduced if you are not also enrolled in Medicare. This is because an employers group plan pays secondary to Medicare (after Medicare), so group benefits could be reduced if you are not also enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B. Check with HR or the group Plan Administrator to verify whether the group plan will pay the full benefits if you do not enroll in Medicare while on COBRA.

**Note:** although the group plan rules may not currently require you to enroll in Medicare, that requirement could change with limited warning, leaving you with no access to enrolling in Medicare until the General Enrollment Period, if you do not enroll in Medicare during the 8-month Special Enrollment Period.

### 2. A POSSIBLE GAP IN COVERAGE

Medicare only allows you to enroll during certain periods. If you do not enroll during either your Initial Enrollment Period or Special Enrollment Period, your coverage could be delayed, resulting in a gap in medical coverage between the time your COBRA coverage ends and the next time you are allowed to enroll in Medicare, which will be the General Enrollment Period (January 1 through March 31, with an effective date of the following July 1.)



#### **For Example:**

If you were eligible for Medicare before losing group coverage on September 30, 2017 and you enrolled in COBRA (but not Medicare), your COBRA coverage would terminate at the end of 18 months, on March 31, 2019.

However, because you did not enroll in Medicare during your Initial Enrollment Period or Special Enrollment Period, you will not be allowed to enroll in Medicare when COBRA ends and will have to wait until the General Enrollment Period. This situation could result in a gap in your medical coverage from the date COBRA terminated (April 1, 2019) until the next General Enrollment Period coverage effective date (July 1, 2020), a period of 14 months.

### 3. A MEDICARE LATE ENROLLMENT PENALTY

You could be required to pay a Medicare late enrollment penalty if you do not enroll during your Initial Enrollment Period or Special Enrollment Period. The late enrollment penalty will continue for as long as you are enrolled in Medicare Part B, or D if applicable.

## ■ What If I Enroll In Both COBRA and Medicare?

If you are covered by both Medicare and a group health plan under COBRA, Medicare will pay primary (before your insurance policy). Covered expenses not paid by Medicare may be covered by the employer group health plan.

## ■ For information About COBRA

- <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/health-plans/cobra>,
- <https://www.medicare.gov/supplements-other-insurance/how-medicare-works-with-other-insurance/which-insurance-pays-first/cobra-7-important-facts>

## ■ For More Information About Medicare

- <http://www.ssa.gov>
- <http://www.medicare.gov>

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