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Effective March 1, 2025

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## OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

The following provisions of this booklet contain a summary in English of your rights and benefits under the plan. If you have questions about your benefits, please contact our Customer Service Department at 1-800-292-8868. If needed, simply request a translator and one will be provided to assist you in understanding your benefits.

### **Purpose of the Plan**

The plan is a stand-alone dental plan. The plan is intended to help you and your covered dependents pay for the costs of dental care. The plan does not pay for all of your dental care. For example, you may be required to contribute through payroll deduction before you obtain coverage under the plan. You may also be required to pay deductibles and coinsurance.

We comply with applicable Federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

### **Using *myBlueCross* to Get More Information**

By being a member of the plan, you get exclusive access to ***myBlueCross*** – an online service only for members. Use it to easily manage your healthcare coverage. All you have to do is register at

## **Receipt of Dental Care**

Even if the plan does not provide benefits, you and your provider may decide that care and treatment are necessary. You and your provider are responsible for making this decision.

## **Beginning of Coverage**

The section of this booklet called [Eligibility](#) will tell you what is required for you to be covered under the plan and when your coverage begins.

## **Limitations and Exclusions**

The plan contains a number of provisions that limit or exclude benefits for certain services and supplies, even if dentally necessary. You need to be aware of these limits and exclusions in order to take maximum advantage of this plan.

## **Dental Necessity**

The plan will only pay for care that is dentally necessary and not investigational, as determined by us. The definitions of dental necessity and investigational are found in the [Definitions](#) section of this booklet.

## **In-Network Benefits**

One way in which the plan tries to manage dental care costs and provide enhanced dental benefits is through negotiated discounts with in-network dentists. In-network dentists are dentists that contract with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama for furnishing dental care services at a reduced price. Preferred Dentists are in-network dentists in the state of Alabama. To locate in-network dentists for the plan, go to [AlabamaBlue.com](http://AlabamaBlue.com). Assuming the services are covered, you will normally only be responsible for out-of-pocket costs such as deductibles and coinsurance when using in-network dentists.

If you receive covered services or supplies from an out-of-network dentist, in most cases, you will have to pay significantly more than what you would pay an in-network dentist because these out-of-network dental care providers can bill you amounts in excess of the allowable amounts under the plan.

## **Relationship Between Blue Cross and/or Blue Shield Plans and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is an independent corporation operating under a license from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association permits us to use the Blue Cross and Blue Shield service marks in the state of Alabama. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama is not acting as an agent of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. No representation is made that any organization other than Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama and your employer will be responsible for honoring this contract. The purpose of this paragraph is for legal clarification; it does not add additional obligations on the part of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama not created under the original agreement.

## **Claims and Appeals**

When you receive services from in-network dentists, your dentist will generally file claims for you. In other cases, you may be required to pay the provider and then file a claim with us for reimbursement under the terms of the plan. If we deny a claim in whole or in part, you may file an appeal with us. We will give you a full and fair review. The provisions of the plan dealing with claims or appeals are found further on in this booklet.

## **Termination of Coverage**

The section below called [Eligibility](#) tells you when coverage will terminate under the plan. If coverage terminates, no benefits will be provided thereafter, even if for a condition that began before the plan or your coverage termination. In some cases you will have the opportunity to buy COBRA coverage after your group coverage terminates. COBRA coverage is explained in detail later in this booklet.

## Respecting Your Privacy

To administer this plan we need your medical information from physicians, hospitals and others. To decide if your claim should be paid or denied or whether other parties are legally responsible for some or all of your expenses, we need records from healthcare providers and other plan administrators. By applying for coverage and participating in this plan, you agree that we may obtain, use and release all records about you and your minor dependents that we need in order to administer this plan or to perform any function authorized or permitted by law. You further direct all other persons to release all records to us about your minor dependents that we need to administer the plan. If you or any provider refuses to provide records, information or evidence we request within reason, we may deny your benefit payments. You also agree that we may call you at any telephone number provided to us by you, your employer, or any healthcare provider in accordance with applicable law. Additionally, we may use or disclose your personal health information for treatment, payment or healthcare operations, or as permitted or authorized by law pursuant to the privacy regulations under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). We have prepared a privacy notice that explains our obligations and your rights under the HIPAA privacy regulations. To request a copy of our notice or to receive more information about our privacy practices or your rights, please contact us at the following address:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama  
Privacy Office  
P.O. Box 2643  
Birmingham, Alabama 35202-2643

You may also go to [AlabamaBlue.com](http://AlabamaBlue.com) for a copy of our privacy notice.

# **ELIGIBILITY**

## **Eligibility for the Plan**

You are eligible to enroll in this plan if all of the following requirements are satisfied:

- You are an employee and are treated as such by your group. Examples of persons who are not employees include independent contractors, board members, and consultants;
- Your group has determined that you work on average 30 or more hours per week (including vacation and certain leaves of absence that are discussed in the section dealing with termination of coverage) in accordance with the Affordable Care Act;
- You are in a category or classification of employees that is covered by the plan;
- You meet any additional eligibility or participation rules established by your group; and,
- You satisfy any applicable waiting period, as explained below.

You must continue to meet these eligibility conditions for the duration of your participation in the plan.

## **Enrollment Waiting Periods**

There may be a waiting period under the plan, as determined by your group. You should contact your





- For children, the date a child ceases to be a dependent;
- For the employee and his or her dependents, the date of the employee's death;
- Your group fails to pay us the amount due within 30 days after the day due;
- Upon discovery of fraud or intentional misrepresentation of a material fact by you or your group;
- Any time your group fails to comply with the contribution or participation rules in the plan documents;
- When none of your group's members still live, reside or work in Alabama; or,
- On 30-days advance written notice from your group to us.

In all cases except the last item above, the termination occurs automatically and without notice. All the dates of termination assume that payment for coverage for you and all other employees in the proper amount has been made to that date. If it has not, termination will occur back to the date for which coverage was last paid.

## **Leaves of Absence**





- Full mouth X-rays will be provided once each 36 months; bitewings no more than twice during any calendar year.
- Routine cleaning will be provided no more than twice during any calendar year.
- Fluoride treatment will be provided to members through age 18 no more than twice during any calendar year.
- Tooth sealants on teeth numbers 3, 14, 19 and 30, limited to one application per tooth each 48 months. Benefits are limited to a maximum payment of \$20 per tooth and limited to the first permanent molars of children through age 13.
- If you change dentists while being treated, or if two or more dentists do one procedure, we'll pay no more than if one dentist did all the work.
- When there are two ways to treat you and both would otherwise be plan benefits, we'll pay toward the less expensive one. The dentist may charge you for any excess.
- Prosthetic – Gold, baked porcelain restorations, veneers, crowns and jackets – If a tooth can be restored with a material such as amalgam, we'll pay toward that procedure even if a more expensive means is used.
- Prosthetic – Payment will be made toward eliminating oral disease and replacing missing teeth.

## COORDINATION OF BENEFITS (COB)

COB is a provision designed to help manage the cost of dental care by avoiding duplication of benefits when a person is covered by two or more benefit plans. COB provisions determine which plan is primary and which is secondary. A primary plan is one whose benefits for a person's dental care coverage must be determined first without taking the existence of any other plan into consideration. A secondary plan is one which takes into consideration the benefits of the primary plan before determining benefits available under its plan. Some COB terms have defined meanings. These terms are set forth at the end of this COB section.

### Order of Benefit Determination

Which plan is primary is decided by the first rule below that applies:

**Noncompliant Plan:** If the other plan is a noncompliant plan, then the other plan shall be primary and this plan shall be secondary unless the COB terms of both plans provide that this plan is primary.

**Employee/Dependent:** The plan covering a patient as an employee, member, subscriber, or contract holder (that is, other than as a dependent) is primary over the plan covering the patient as a dependent. In some cases, depending upon the size of the group, Medicare secondary payer rules may require us to reverse this order of payment. This can occur when the patient is covered as an inactive or retired employee, is also covered as a dependent of an active employee, and is also covered by Medicare. In this case, the order of benefit determination will be as follows: first, the plan covering the patient as a dependent; second, Medicare; and third, the plan covering the patient as an inactive or retired employee.

**Dependent Child – Parents Not Separated or Divorced:** If both plans cover the patient as a dependent child of parents who are married or living together (regardless of whether they have ever been married), the plan of the parent whose birthday falls earlier in the year will be primary. If the parents have the same birthday, the plan covering the patient longer is primary.

**Dependent Child – Separated or Divorced Parents:** If two or more plans cover the patient as a dependent child of parents who are divorced, separated, or no longer living together (regardless of whether they have ever been married), benefits are determined in this order:

1. If there is no court decree allocating responsibility for the child's dental care expenses or dental care coverage, the order of benefits for the child are as follows:
  - a. first, the plan of the custodial parent;
  - b. second, the plan covering the custodial parent's spouse;

- c. third, the plan covering the non-custodial parent; and,
  - d. last, the plan covering the non-custodial parent's spouse.
2. If a court decree states that a parent is responsible for the dependent child's dental care expenses or dental care coverage and the plan of that parent has actual knowledge of those terms, the plan of the court-ordered parent is primary.

If the court-ordered parent has no dental care coverage for the dependent child, benefits will be determined in the following order:

- a. first, the plan of the spouse of the court-ordered parent;
- b. second, the plan of the non-court-ordered parent; and,
- c. third, the plan of the spouse of the non-court-ordered parent.

If a court decree states that both parents are responsible for the dependent child's dental care expenses or dental care coverage, the provisions of "Dependent Child – Parents Not Separated or Divorced" (the "birthday rule") above shall determine the order of benefits.

If a court decree states that the parents have joint custody without specifying that one parent has responsibility for the dental care expenses or dental care coverage of the dependent child, the provisions of the "birthday rule" shall determine the order of benefits.

3. For a dependent child covered under more than one plan of individuals who are not the parents of the child, the order of benefits shall be determined, as applicable, under the "birthday rule" as if those individuals were parents of the child.

**Active Employee or Retired or Laid-Of uPg order:**

**Equal Division:** If the plans cannot agree on the order of benefits within thirty (30) calendar days after the plans have received all of the information needed to pay the claim, the plans shall immediately pay the claim in equal shares and determine their relative liabilities following payment, except that no plan shall be required to pay more than it would have paid had it been the primary plan.

### **Determination of Amount of Payment**

1. If this plan is primary, it shall pay benefits as if the secondary plan did not exist.
2. If our records indicate this plan is secondary, we will not process your claims until you have filed them

**Plan:** The term “plan” includes group insurance contracts, health maintenance organization (HMO) contracts, closed panel plans or other forms of group or group-type coverage (whether insured or uninsured); dental care components of long-term care contracts, such as skilled nursing care; medical benefits under group or individual automobile contracts; and Medicare or any other federal governmental plan, as permitted by law.

The term “plan” does not include non-group or individual health or medical reimbursement insurance contracts. The term “plan” also does not include hospital indemnity coverage or other fixed indemnity coverage; accident-only coverage; specified disease or specified accident coverage; limited benefit health coverage, as defined by state law; school accident type coverage; benefits for non-medical components of long-term care policies; Medicare supplement policies; Medicaid policies; or coverage under other federal governmental plans, unless permitted by law.

**Primary Plan:** The term “primary plan” means a plan whose benefits for a person’s dental care coverage must be determined without taking the existence of any other plan into consideration. A plan is a primary plan if:

- The plan either has no order of benefit determination rules, or its rules differ from those permitted by this regulation; or,
- All plans that cover the person use the order of benefit determination rules required by this regulation, and under those rules the plan determines its benefits first.

**Secondary Plan:** The term “secondary plan” means a plan that is not a primary plan.

## **Right to Receive and Release Needed Information**

Certain facts about dental care coverage and services are needed to apply these COB rules and to determine benefits payable under this plan and other plans. We may get the facts we need from or give them to other organizations or persons for the purpose of applying these rules and determining benefits payable under this plan and other plans covering the person claiming benefits. We are not required to tell or get the consent of any person to do this. Each person claiming benefits under this plan must give us any facts we need to apply these COB rules and to determine benefits payable as a result of these rules.

## **Facility of Payment**

A payment made under another plan may include an amount that should have been paid under this plan. If it does, we may pay that amount to the organization that made that payment. That amount will then be treated as though it were a benefit paid under this plan. We will not have to pay that amount again. The term “payment made” includes providing benefits in the form of services, in which case “payment made” means the reasonable cash value of the benefits provided in the form of services.

## **Right of Recovery**

If the amount of the payments made by us is more than we should have paid under this COB provision, we may recover the excess from one or more of the persons it has paid to or for whom it has paid; or any other person or organization that may be responsible for the benefits or services provided for the covered person. The “amount of the payments made” includes the reasonable cash value of any benefits provided in the form of services.

## **Special Rules for Coordination with Medicare**

Except where otherwise required by federal law, the plan will pay benefits on a secondary basis to Medicare or will pay no benefits at all for services or supplies that are included within the scope of Medicare’s coverage, depending upon, among other things, the size of your group, whether your group is a member of an association, and the type of coordination method used by your group. For example, if this plan is secondary to Medicare under federal law, this plan will pay no benefits for services or supplies that are included within the scope of Medicare’s coverage if you fail to enroll in Medicare when eligible.



# SUBROGATION

## Right of Subrogation

If we pay or provide any benefits for you under this plan, we are subrogated to all rights of recovery which you have in contract, tort, or otherwise against any person or organization for the amount of benefits we have paid or provided. That means that we may use your right to recover money from that other person or organization.

## Right of Reimbursement

Besides the right of subrogation, we have a separate right to be reimbursed or repaid from any money you, including your family members, recover for an injury or condition for which we have paid plan benefits. This means that you promise to repay us from any money you recover the amount we have paid or provided in plan benefits. It also means that if you recover money as a result of a claim or a lawsuit, whether by settlement or otherwise, you must repay us. And, if you are paid by any person or company besides us, including the person who injured you, that person's insurer, or your own insurer, you must repay us. In these and all other cases, you must repay us.

We have the right to be reimbursed or repaid first from any money you recover, even if you are not paid for all of your claim for damages and you are not made whole for your loss. This means that you promise to repay us first even if the money you recover is for (or said to be for) a loss besides plan benefits, such as pain and suffering. It also means that you promise to repay us first even if another person or company has paid for part of your loss. And it means that you promise to repay us first even if the person who recovers the money is a minor. In these and all other cases, we still have the right to first reimbursement or repayment out of any recovery you receive from any source.

## Right to Recovery

You agree to furnish us promptly all information which you have concerning your rights of recovery or recoveries from other persons or organizations and to fully assist and cooperate with us in protecting and obtaining our reimbursement and subrogation rights in accordance with this section.

You or your attorney will notify us before filing any suit or settling any claim so as to enable us to participate in the suit or settlement to protect and enforce this plan's rights under this section. If you do notify us so that we are able to and do recover the amount of our benefit payments for you, we will share proportionately with you in any attorney's fees charged to you by your attorney for obtaining the recovery. If you do not give us that notice, or we retain our own attorney to appear in any court (including bankruptcy court), our reimbursement or subrogation recovery under this section will not be decreased by any attorney's fee for your attorney or under the common fund theory.

You further agree not to allow our reimbursement and subrogation rights under this plan to be limited or harmed by any other acts or failures to act on your part. It is understood and agreed that if you do, we may suspend or terminate payment or provision of any further benefits for you under the plan.

# DENTAL BENEFIT EXCLUSIONS

We will not provide benefits for the following:

## A

**Anesthetic** services performed by and billed for by a dentist other than the attending dentist or his assistant.

**Appliances** or restorations to alter vertical dimensions from its present state or restoring the occlusion. Such procedures include but are not limited to equilibration, periodontal splinting, full mouth rehabilitation, restoration of tooth structure lost from the grinding of teeth or the wearing down of the teeth and restoration from the malalignment of teeth.

## B

Dental services to the extent coverage is available to the member under any other **Blue Cross and Blue Shield contract**.

## M

Dental services with respect to **malformations** from birth or primarily for appearance.

## N

Services or expenses of any kind, if not required by a dentist, or if **not dentally necessary**.

## O

Charges for **oral** hygiene and dietary information.

## P

Charges for dental care or treatment by a **person** other than the attending dentist unless the treatment is rendered under the direct supervision of the attending dentist.

Charges for **plaque control program**.

## R

Services of a dentist rendered to a member who is **related** to the dentist by blood or marriage or who regularly resides in the dentist's household.

## W

Dental services or expenses in cases covered in whole or in part by **workers' compensation** or employers' liability laws, state or federal. This applies whether you fail to file a claim under that law. It applies whether the law is enforced against or assumed by the employer. It applies whether the law provides for dental services as such. Finally, it applies whether your employer has insurance coverage for benefits under the law.

## CLAIMS AND APPEALS

This section of your booklet explains how we process dental claims and how you can appeal a partial or complete denial of a claim. Remember that you may always call our Customer Service Department for help if you have a question or problem that you would like us to fix without an appeal.

The claims and appeal procedures are designed to comply with the requirements of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA). Even if your plan is not covered by ERISA, we will process your claim according to ERISA's standards and provide you with the ERISA appeal rights that are discussed in this section of your booklet.

You must act on your own behalf or through an authorized representative if you wish to exercise your rights under this section of your booklet. An authorized representative is someone you designate in writing to act on your behalf. We have developed a form that you must use if you wish to designate an authorized representative. You can get the form by calling our Customer Service Department. You can also go to our Internet website at [AlabamaBlue.com](http://AlabamaBlue.com) and ask us to mail you a copy of the form. If a person is not properly designated as your authorized representative, we will not be able to deal with him or her in connection with the exercise of your rights under this section of your booklet.

### Claims

**What Constitutes a Claim:** For you to obtain benefits after dental services have been rendered, we must receive a properly completed and filed claim from you or your provider.

In order for us to treat a submission by you or your provider as a claim, it must be submitted on a properly completed standardized us to 0 0 1 421.3operly

data elements that we specify in advance. Most providers are aware of our claim filing requirements and will file claims for you. If your provider does not file your claim for you, you should call our Customer Service Department and ask for a claim form. Tell us the type of service or supply for which you wish to file a claim (for example, hospital, physician, or pharmacy), and we will send you the proper type of claim form. When you receive the form, complete it, attach an itemized bill, and send it to us at 450 Riverchase Parkway East, Birmingham, Alabama 35244-2858. Claims must be submitted and received by us within 24 months after the service takes place to be eligible for benefits.

If we receive a submission that does not qualify as a claim, we will notify you or your provider of the additional information we need. Once we receive that information, we will process the submission as a claim.

**Processing of Claims:** Even if we have received all of the information that we need in order to treat a submission as a claim, from time to time we might need additional information in order to determine whether the claim is payable. The most common example of this is X-rays. If we need this sort of additional information, we will ask you to furnish it to us, and we will suspend further processing of your claim until the information is received. You will have 90 days to provide the information to us. In order to expedite our receipt of the information, we may request it directly from your provider. If we do this, we will send you a copy of our request. However, you will remain responsible for seeing that we get the information on time.

Ordinarily, we will notify you of our decision within 30 days of the date on which your claim is filed. If it is necessary for us to ask for additional information, we will notify you of our decision within 15 days after we receive the requested information. If we do not receive the information, your claim will be considered

You have 180 days following our adverse benefit determination within which to submit an appeal.

**How to File an Appeal:** If you wish to file an appeal of an adverse benefit determination relating to a claim we recommend that you use a form that we have developed for this purpose. The form will help you provide us with the information that we need to consider your appeal. To get the form, you may call our Customer Service Department. You may also go to our Internet website at [AlabamaBlue.com](http://AlabamaBlue.com). Once there, you may ask us to send a copy of the form to you.

If you choose not to use our appeal form, you may send us a letter. Your letter must contain at least the following information:

- The patient's name;
- The patient's contract;
- Sufficient information to reasonably identify the claim or claims being appealed, such as date of service, provider name, procedure (if known), and claim number (if available). (The best way to satisfy this requirement is to include a copy of your Claims Report with your appeal.); and,
- A statement that you are filing an appeal.

You must send your appeal to the following address:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama  
Attention: Customer Service Department – Appeals  
P.O. Box 12185  
Birmingham, Alabama 35202-2185

Please note that if you call or write us without following the rules just described for filing an appeal, we will not treat your inquiry as an appeal. We will, of course, do everything we can to resolve your questions or concerns.

**Conduct of the Appeal:** We will assign your appeal to one or more persons within our organization who are neither the persons who made the initial determination nor subordinates of those persons. If resolution of your appeal requires us to make a medical judgment (such as whether services or supplies are dentally necessary), we will consult a health care professional who has appropriate expertise. If we consulted a health care professional during our initial decision, we will not consult that same person or a subordinate of that person during our consideration of your appeal.

If we need more information, we will ask you to provide it to us. In some cases we may ask your provider to furnish that information directly to us. If we do this, we will send you a copy of our request.

Your written appeal must state that you are filing a voluntary appeal.

If you file a voluntary appeal, we will not assert in court a failure to exhaust administrative remedies if you fail to exhaust the voluntary appeal. We will also agree that any defense based upon timeliness or statutes of limitations will be tolled during the time that your voluntary appeal is pending. In addition, we will not impose any fees or costs on you as part of your voluntary appeal.

You may ask us to provide you with more information about voluntary appeals. This additional information will allow you to make an informed judgment about whether to request a voluntary appeal.

## **COBRA COVERAGE**

COBRA is the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (Public Law 99-272, Title X). If COBRA applies, you may be able to temporarily continue coverage under the plan beyond the point at which coverage would otherwise end because of a life event known as a "qualifying event." After a qualifying event, COBRA coverage may 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 a qualifying event. You are not entitled to buy COBRA coverage if you are employed as a nonresident alien who received no U.S. source income, nor may your family members buy COBRA.

Not all group dental plans are covered by COBRA. As a general rule, COBRA applies to all employer sponsored group dental plans (other than church plans) if the employer employed 20 or more full or part-time employees on at least 50% of its typical business days during the preceding calendar year. In determining the number of employees of an employer for purposes of COBRA, certain related corporations (parent/subsidiary and brother/sister corporations) must be treated as one employer. Special rules may also apply if the employer participates in an association plan.

You must contact your employer to determine whether this plan is covered by COBRA. Blue Cross is not your plan administrator.

By law, COBRA benefits are required to be the same as those made available to similarly situated active employees. If the group changes the plan coverage, coverage will also change for you. You will have to pay for COBRA coverage. Your cost will equal the full cost of the coverage plus a two percent administrative fee. Your cost may change over time, as the cost of benefits under the plan changes. If the group stops providing dental care through Blue Cross, Blue Cross will stop administering your COBRA benefits. You should contact your group to determine if you have further rights under COBRA.

### **COBRA Rights for Covered Employees**

If you are a covered employee, you will become a qualified beneficiary if you lose coverage under the plan because either one of the following qualifying events happens:

- Your hours of employment are reduced, or
- Your employment ends for any reason other than your gross misconduct.

COBRA coverage will continue for up to a total of 18 months from the date of your termination of employment or reduction in hours, assuming you pay your premiums on time. If, apart from COBRA, your group continues to provide coverage to you after your termination of employment or reduction in hours (regardless of whether such extended coverage is permitted under the terms of the plan), the extended coverage you receive will ordinarily reduce the time period over which you may buy COBRA benefits.

If you are on a leave of absence covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), and you do not return to work, you will be given the opportunity to buy COBRA coverage. The period of your COBRA coverage will begin when you fail to return to work following the expiration of your FMLA leave or you inform your group that you do not intend to return to work, whichever occurs first.

If the plan provides dental coverage for retired employees, sometimes filing a proceeding in bankruptcy under Title 11 of the United States Bankruptcy Code can be a qualifying event. If a proceeding in bankruptcy is filed with respect to the group, and the bankruptcy results in the loss of coverage of any covered retired employee, the retired employee will become a qualified beneficiary with respect to the

bankruptcy. The retired employee's spouse, surviving spouse, and dependent children will also become qualified beneficiaries if bankruptcy results in the loss of their coverage.

## **COBRA Rights for a Covered Spouse or Dependent Children**

If you are covered under the plan as a spouse or a dependent child of a covered employee, you will become a qualified beneficiary if you would otherwise lose coverage under the plan as a result of any of the following events:

- The covered employee dies;
- The covered employee's hours of employment are reduced;
- The covered employee's employment ends for any reason other than his or her gross misconduct;
- The covered employee becomes enrolled in Medicare;
- Divorce of the covered employee and spouse; or,
- For a dependent child, the dependent child loses dependent child status under the plan.

When the qualifying event is a divorce or a child losing dependent status under the plan, you must timely notify the plan administrator of the qualifying event. You must provide this notice within 60 days of the event or within 60 days of the date on which coverage would be lost because of the event, whichever is later. See the section called [Notice Procedures](#) for more information about the notice procedures you must use to give this notice.

If you are a covered spouse or dependent child, the period of COBRA coverage will generally last up to a total of 18 months in the case of a termination of employment or reduction in hours and up to a total of 36 months in the case of other qualifying events, provided that premiums are paid on time. If, however, the covered employee became enrolled in Medicare before the end of his or her employment or reduction in hours, COBRA coverage for the covered spouse and dependent children will continue for up to 36 months from the date of Medicare enrollment or 18 months from the date of termination of employment or reduction in hours, whichever period ends last.

If you are a child of the covered employee or former employee and you are receiving benefits under the plan pursuant to a qualified medical child support order, you are entitled to the same rights under COBRA as a dependent child of the covered employee.

If your coverage is canceled in anticipation of divorce and a divorce later occurs, the divorce may be a qualifying event even though you actually lost coverage under the plan earlier. If you timely notify the plan administrator of your divorce and can establish that your coverage was canceled in anticipation of divorce, COBRA coverage may be available to you beginning on the date of your divorce (but not for the period between the date your coverage ended and the date of the divorce).

## **Extension of COBRA for Disability**

If you or a covered member of your family is or becomes disabled under Title II (OASDI) or Title XVI (SSI) of the Social Security Act and you timely notify the plan administrator, the 18-month period of COBRA coverage for the disabled person may be extended to up to 11 additional months (for a total of up to 29 months) or the date the disabled person becomes covered by Medicare, whichever occurs sooner. This 29-month period also applies to any non-disabled family members who are receiving COBRA coverage, regardless of whether the disabled individual elects the 29-month period for him or herself. The 29-month period will run from the date of the termination of employment or reduction in hours. For this disability extension to apply, the disability must have started at some time before the 60<sup>th</sup> day of COBRA coverage and must last at least until the end of the 18-month period of COBRA coverage.

The cost for COBRA coverage after the 18<sup>th</sup> month will be 150% of the full cost of coverage under the plan, assuming that the disabled person elects to be covered under the disability extension. If the only persons who elect the disability extension are non-disabled family members, the cost of coverage will remain at 102% of the full cost of coverage.

For a spouse and children, the disability extension may be further extended to 36 months if another qualifying event (death, divorce, enrollment in Medicare, or loss of dependent status) occurs during the 29-month period. See the following discussion under "Extensions of COBRA for Second Qualifying Events" for more information about this.

For this disability extension of COBRA coverage to apply, you must give the plan administrator timely notice of Social Security's disability determination before the end of the 18-month period of COBRA coverage and within 60 days after the later of (1) the date of the initial qualifying event, (2) the date on which coverage would be lost because of the initial qualifying event, or (3) the date of Social Security's determination. You must also notify the plan administrator within 30 days of any revocation of Social Security disability benefits. See the section called [Notice Procedures](#) for more information about the notice procedures you must use to give this notice.

## Extensions of COBRA for Second Qualifying Events

For a spouse and children receiving COBRA coverage, the 18-month period may be extended to 36 months if another qualifying event occurs during the 18-month period, if you give the plan administrator timely notice of the second qualifying event. The 36-month period will run from the date of the termination of employment or reduction in hours.

This extension is available to a spouse and children receiving COBRA coverage if the covered employee or former employee dies, becomes enrolled in Medicare, or gets divorced, or if the child stops being eligible under the plan as a dependent child, *but only if the event would have caused the spouse or child to lose coverage under the plan had the first qualifying event not occurred.* For example, if a covered employee is terminated from employment, elects family coverage under COBRA, and then later enrolls in Medicare, this second event will rarely be a second qualifying event that would entitle the spouse and children to extended COBRA coverage. This is so because, for almost all plans that are subject to COBRA, this event would not cause the spouse or dependent children to lose coverage under the plan if the covered employee had not been terminated from employment.

For this 18-month extension to apply, you must give the plan administrator timely notice of the second qualifying event within 60 days after the event occurs or within 60 days after the date on which coverage would be lost because of the event, whichever is later. See the section called [Notice Procedures](#) for more information about the notice procedures you must use to give this notice.

## Notice Procedures

*If you do not follow these notice procedures or if you do not give the plan administrator notice within the required 60-day notice period, you will not be entitled to COBRA or an extension of COBRA as a result of an initial qualifying event of divorce or loss of dependent child status, a second qualifying event or Social Security's disability determination.*

Any notices of initial qualifying events of divorce or loss of dependent child status, second qualifying events or Social Security disability determinations that you give must be in writing. Your notice must be received by the plan administrator or its designee no later than the last day of the required 60-day notice period unless you mail it. If mailed, your notice must be postmarked no later than the last day of the required 60-day notice period.

For your notice of an initial qualifying event that is a divorce or a child losing dependent status under the plan and for your notice of a second qualifying event, you must mail or hand-deliver your notice to the plan administrator. If the initial or second qualifying event is a divorce, your notice must include a copy of the divorce decree. For your convenience, you may ask the plan administrator for a free copy of the Notice by Qualified Beneficiaries form that you may use to give your notice.

For your notice of Social Security's disability determination, if you are instructed to send your COBRA premiums to Blue Cross, you must mail or hand-deliver your notice to Blue Cross at the following address: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, Attention: Customer Accounts, 450 Riverchase Parkway East, Birmingham, Alabama 35298-0001, or fax your notice to Blue Cross at 205-220-6884 or 1-888-810-6884 (toll-free). If you do not send your COBRA premiums to Blue Cross, you must mail or hand-deliver your notice to the plan administrator. Your notice must also include a copy of Social Security's disability determination. For your convenience, you may ask the plan administrator for a free copy of the Notice by Qualified Beneficiaries form that you may use to give your notice.



## **Adding New Dependents to COBRA Coverage**

You may add new dependents to your COBRA coverage under the circumstances permitted under the plan. Except as explained below, any new dependents that you add to your COBRA coverage will not have independent COBRA rights. This means, for example, that if you die, they will not be able to continue coverage.

If you are the covered employee and you acquire a child by birth or placement for adoption while you are receiving COBRA coverage, then your new child will have independent COBRA rights. This means that if you die, for example, your child may elect to continue receiving COBRA benefits for up to 36 months from the date on which your COBRA benefits began.

If your new child is disabled within the 60-day period beginning on the date of birth or placement of adoption, the child may elect coverage under the disability extension if you timely notify the plan administrator of Social Security's disability determination as explained above.

## **Medicare and COBRA Coverage**

If you think you will need both Medicare and dental coverage through COBRA after your retirement or other qualifying event under COBRA, you should enroll in Medicare on or before the date on which you make your election to buy COBRA coverage. If you do this, COBRA coverage for your dependents will continue for a period of 18 months from the date of your retirement or 36 months from the date of your Medicare enrollment, whichever period ends last. Your COBRA coverage will continue for a period of 18 months from the date of retirement. If you do not enroll in Medicare on or before the date on which you make your election to buy COBRA coverage, your COBRA benefits will end when your Medicare coverage begins. Your covered dependents will have the opportunity to continue their own COBRA coverage.

If you do not want both Medicare and COBRA for yourself, your covered family members will still have the option to buy COBRA when you retire.

## **Electing COBRA**

After the plan administrator receives timely notice that a qualifying event has occurred, the plan administrator is responsible for (1) notifying you that you have the option to buy COBRA, and (2), sending you an application to buy COBRA coverage.

You have 60 days within which to elect to buy COBRA coverage. The 60-day period begins to run from the later of (1) the date you would lose coverage under the plan, or (2), the date on which the group notifies you that you have the option to buy COBRA coverage. Each qualified beneficiary has an independent right to elect COBRA coverage. You may elect COBRA coverage on behalf of your spouse, and parents may elect COBRA coverage on behalf of their children.

After you make your first payment for COBRA coverage, you must make periodic payments for each subsequent coverage period. Each of these periodic payments is due on the first day of the month for that coverage period. There is a grace period of 30-days for all premium payments after the first 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, any claim you submit for

## Notice

## Changes in the Plan

By giving a 30-day notice to the group, we may amend any and all provisions of the plan or the amount of fees that you or your group must pay for coverage under the plan (If the change is a material modification in any of the terms of the plan that would affect the content of the Summary of Benefits and Coverage for the plan that is not reflected in the most recently provided Summary of Benefits and Coverage, and the change occurs other than in connection with a renewal or reissuance of coverage, the plan will give you written notice at least 60 days before the effective date of the change). The fiduciary obligation to notify you of these changes belongs to the group, not us. The plan amendment will be effective whether or not the group has notified you of the amendment. Payment of premiums by the group after the effective date of the amendment will constitute acceptance by you and the group of the changes.

Except as otherwise provided in the contract, no representative or employee of Blue Cross is authorized to amend or vary the terms and conditions of the plan or to make any agreement or promise not specifically contained in the plan documents or to waive any provision of the plan documents. This means, in part, that no representative, employee, or agent of Blue Cross may make any changes to the plan over the telephone or verbally.

## No Assignment

As discussed in more detail in the [Claims and Appeals](#) section of this booklet, most providers are aware of our claim filing requirements and will file claims for you. If your provider does not file your claim for you, you should call our Customer Service Department and ask for a claim form. However, regardless of who files a claim for benefits under the plan, we will not honor an assignment by you of payment of your claim to anyone. What this means is that we will pay covered benefits to you or your in-network provider (as required by our contract with your in-network provider) – even if you have assigned payment of your claim to someone else. With out-of-network providers, we may choose whether to pay you or the provider—even if you have assigned payment of your claim to someone else. When we pay you or your provider, this completes our obligation to you under the plan. Upon your death or incompetence, or if you are a minor, we may pay your estate, your guardian or any relative we believe is due to be paid. This, too, completes our plan obligation to you.

## Alabama Insurance Fraud Investigation Unit and Criminal Prevention Act

Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or who knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to restitution, fines, or confinement in prison, or any combination thereof.

## DEFINITIONS

**Affordable Care Act:** The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, as amended by the Health Care and Educational Reconciliation Act, and its implementing rules and regulations.

**Allowable Amount:** The amount of a dentist's charge that Blue Cross will recognize as covered expenses for medically/dentally necessary services provided by the plan. This amount is generally limited to the lesser of the dentist's charge for care or the fee for a procedure in the in-network dentist's fee schedule. In-network dentists normally accept this allowable amount (subject to any applicable copayments, coinsurance, or deductibles that are the responsibility of the patient) as payment in full for covered services. Out-of-network providers may bill the member for charges in excess of the allowable amount.

**Blue Cross:** Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, except where the context designates otherwise.

**Contract:** Unless the context requires otherwise, the terms "contract" and "plan" are used interchangeably. The contract includes our financial agreement or administrative services agreement with the group.

**Dentally Necessary or Dental Necessity:** Services or supplies which are necessary to treat your



If there is any conflict between any of the foregoing documents, we will resolve that conflict in a manner that best reflects the intent of the group and us as of the date on which claims were incurred. Unless the context requires otherwise, the terms "plan" and "contract" have the same meaning.

**Plan Administrator:** The group that sponsors the plan and is responsible for its overall administration. If the plan is covered under ERISA, the group referred to in this definition is the "administrator" and "sponsor" of the plan within the meaning of section 3(16) of ERISA.

**We, Us, Our:** Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama.

**You, Your:** The contract holder or member as shown by the context.

## **NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. We do not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama

- x Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as qualified sign language interpreters and written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- x Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as qualified interpreters and information written in other languages.

If you need these services, contact our 1557 Compliance Coordinator. If you believe that we have failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email at: Blue Cross and Blue



450 Riverchase Parkway East  
P.O. Box 995  
Birmingham, Alabama 35298-0001

**Customer Service Department:**

1-800-292-8868 (TTY 711) toll-free

**Website:**

[AlabamaBlue.com](http://AlabamaBlue.com)

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Dental Plan

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