

Health Insurance 101

Helpful Information for College Students

As preparations for college get finalized, students and their parents should think carefully about the student's ongoing health insurance needs.

The federal health care law that took effect on September 23, 2010, allows adults up to age 26 to be covered under the parents' health insurance policies. The law states that the covered young adult does not have to be a dependent on the parents' tax returns or even live with the parents. Under federal law, a qualified young adult cannot be required to pay more for coverage than similarly situated individuals who will not lose coverage due to the loss of dependent status.

If the student is covered under a plan subject to Nebraska insurance law, the parent may have the option to continue the student's coverage to age 30. State law permits the company or the plan to charge a premium equal to the amount charged for a single adult insured, if the parent elects to continue the student's coverage.

It is important to note, if the student's current coverage is being provided through a health maintenance organization (HMO) or an exclusive provider organization (EPO) plan, the student may not be covered, except in the case of an emergency, if he or she is attending a college outside of the plan's service area.

For more information about the coverage provided the college student under a parent's plan, students and their parents are encouraged to contact the insurance company directly. This is also a good time to request additional copies of insurance identification cards, and prescription drug cards, for the students to take to school with them.

A student who does not have health insurance through a parent's health insurance policy, or who has only limited coverage, may want to consider buying a student health insurance plan. Student plans are sold by an insurer that has contracted with a college to offer coverage to its students. In general, these plans may have more limited benefits and more exclusions than traditional health insurance plans, and may require the student to use a campus-based student health service rather than a provider in the community. Some colleges may require students to purchase the student health insurance plan if they don't have other comparable health insurance coverage.

Additional Information

The Department's Consumer Affairs Division is available to answer insurance-related questions as they arise. The Department can be reached locally at 402-471-2201 or on its toll-free consumer hotline at 1-877-564-7323. Additional insurance information may be obtained from the Department's website at doi.nebraska.gov.