

# CHIP Special Enrollment Period Frequently Asked Questions



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Florida**

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## **What is CHIP?**

The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP, formerly known as the State Children's Health Insurance Program or SCHIP) is a federal/state program designed to provide health care coverage for uninsured children and some adults.

## **What changes took effect to CHIP on April 1 as a result of the law signed by President Obama back in February?**

The expanded CHIP law creates a new HIPAA special enrollment period for eligible employees and their dependents if they become ineligible for Medicaid or CHIP and lose coverage, or if they become eligible for a state's premium assistance program (if available). Unlike current HIPAA special enrollment rights, which give employees 30 days after a triggering event to enroll, employees experiencing a Medicaid/CHIP event have *60 days* from the date of the event to request enrollment in the employer plan.

## **Who needs to comply with this change?**

All small and large groups are subject to the terms of this provision, including ASO groups.

## **Is BCBSF sending out changes to the Summary Plan Documents or HIPAA notices?**

Member contracts and endorsements will be updated and sent to members beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2009. The Guide for Group Administrators and the revised Notice of Special Enrollment Rights (#15741) have been updated and are available on the corporate website. Enrollment kits should now include the revised Notice of Special Enrollment Rights (#15741).

Sales reps and agents are encouraged to discuss these changes with the Benefit Administrator as soon as possible to ensure the group complies with the enrollment rights provision.

## **Does the group have to inform all of their employees of this change?**

At the very least, employers should include the updated notices in enrollment materials for newly eligible employees beginning on April 1, 2009. Although not currently required by the law, it's probably a good idea for groups to notify *all* employees, including those who previously waived coverage, about their new special enrollment rights.

Forward the updated Notice of Special Enrollment Rights form (#15741) to your groups and inform them to begin using this when communicating to employees.

## **How are we addressing the new State Option for Premium Assistance?**

The Optional State Premium Assistance program that is referenced in the CHIP law was passed by Congress on Feb. 4th. This program is designed to offset employer contributions for children insured in private health plans subject to certain limitations and restrictions.

The new law allows, but **does not require**, states to provide premium assistance to help cover premium costs for qualifying children (and in some cases, their parents) covered under an employer-sponsored plan.

**Florida currently does not have a State Option Premium Assistance Program.** The Florida Legislature is currently in session, and they may or may not authorize the program. We will know in May after the session concludes.