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be construed to preclude a plan from providing, in accordance with its terms, continuation coverage to a qualified beneficiary although a notice requirement of this section was not satisfied.

(h) *Applicability*. This section shall apply to any notice obligation described in this section that arises on or after the first day of the first plan year beginning on or after November 26, 2004.

[69 FR 30097, May 26, 2004]

§ 2590.606–4 Notice requirements for plan administrators.

(a) *General*. Pursuant to section 606(a)(4) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended (the Act), the administrator of a group health plan subject to the continuation coverage requirements of Part 6 of title I of the Act shall provide, in accordance with this section, notice to each qualified beneficiary of the qualified beneficiary's rights to continuation coverage under the plan.

(b) *Notice of right to elect continuation coverage*. (1) Except as provided in paragraph (b) (2) or (3) of this section, upon receipt of a notice of qualifying event furnished in accordance with § 2590.606–2 or § 2590.606–3, the administrator shall furnish to each qualified beneficiary, not later than 14 days after receipt of the notice of qualifying event, a notice meeting the requirements of paragraph (b)(4) of this section.

(2) In the case of a plan with respect to which an employer of a covered employee is also the administrator of the plan, except as provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, if the employer is otherwise required to furnish a notice of a qualifying event to an administrator pursuant to § 2590.606–2, the administrator shall furnish to each qualified beneficiary a notice meeting the requirements of paragraph (b)(4) of this section not later than 44 days after:

(i) In the case of a plan that provides, with respect to the qualifying event, that continuation coverage and the applicable period for providing notice under section 606(a)(2) of the Act shall commence with the date of loss of coverage, the date on which a qualified beneficiary loses coverage under the plan due to the qualifying event; or

(ii) In all other cases, the date on which the qualifying event occurred.

(3) In the case of a plan that is a multiemployer plan, a notice meeting the requirements of paragraph (b)(4) of this section shall be furnished not later than the later of:

(i) The end of the time period provided in paragraph (b)(1) of this section; or

(ii) The end of the time period provided in the terms of the plan for such purpose.

(4) The notice required by this paragraph (b) shall be written in a manner calculated to be understood by the average plan participant and shall contain the following information:

(i) The name of the plan under which continuation coverage is available; and the name, address and telephone number of the party responsible under the plan for the administration of continuation coverage benefits;

(ii) Identification of the qualifying event;

(iii) Identification, by status or name, of the qualified beneficiaries who are recognized by the plan as being entitled to elect continuation coverage with respect to the qualifying event, and the date on which coverage under the plan will terminate (or has terminated) unless continuation coverage is elected;

(iv) A statement that each individual who is a qualified beneficiary with respect to the qualifying event has an independent right to elect continuation coverage, that a covered employee or a qualified beneficiary who is the spouse of the covered employee (or was the spouse of the covered employee on the day before the qualifying event occurred) may elect continuation coverage on behalf of all other qualified beneficiaries with respect to the qualifying event, and that a parent or legal guardian may elect continuation coverage on behalf of a minor child;

(v) An explanation of the plan's procedures for electing continuation coverage, including an explanation of the time period during which the election must be made, and the date by which the election must be made;

(vi) An explanation of the consequences of failing to elect or waiving

continuation coverage, including an explanation that a qualified beneficiary's decision whether to elect continuation coverage will affect the future rights of qualified beneficiaries to portability of group health coverage, guaranteed access to individual health coverage, and special enrollment under part 7 of title I of the Act, with a reference to where a qualified beneficiary may obtain additional information about such rights; and a description of the plan's procedures for revoking a waiver of the right to continuation coverage before the date by which the election must be made;

(vii) A description of the continuation coverage that will be made available under the plan, if elected, including the date on which such coverage will commence, either by providing a description of the coverage or by reference to the plan's summary plan description;

(viii) An explanation of the maximum period for which continuation coverage will be available under the plan, if elected; an explanation of the continuation coverage termination date; and an explanation of any events that might cause continuation coverage to be terminated earlier than the end of the maximum period;

(ix) A description of the circumstances (if any) under which the maximum period of continuation coverage may be extended due either to the occurrence of a second qualifying event or a determination by the Social Security Administration, under title II or XVI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 401 *et seq.* or 1381 *et seq.*) (SSA), that the qualified beneficiary is disabled, and the length of any such extension;

(x) In the case of a notice that offers continuation coverage with a maximum duration of less than 36 months, a description of the plan's requirements regarding the responsibility of qualified beneficiaries to provide notice of a second qualifying event and notice of a disability determination under the SSA, along with a description of the plan's procedures for providing such notices, including the times within which such notices must be provided and the consequences of failing to provide such notices. The notice shall also explain the responsibility of qualified beneficiaries to provide notice that a disabled qualified beneficiary has subsequently been determined to no longer be disabled;

(xi) A description of the amount, if any, that each qualified beneficiary will be required to pay for continuation coverage;

(xii) A description of the due dates for payments, the qualified beneficiaries' right to pay on a monthly basis, the grace periods for payment, the address to which payments should be sent, and the consequences of delayed payment and non-payment;

(xiii) An explanation of the importance of keeping the administrator informed of the current addresses of all participants or beneficiaries under the plan who are or may become qualified beneficiaries; and

(xiv) A statement that the notice does not fully describe continuation coverage or other rights under the plan, and that more complete information regarding such rights is available in the plan's summary plan description or from the plan administrator.

(c) *Notice of unavailability of continuation coverage.* (1) In the event that an administrator receives a notice furnished in accordance with § 2590.606–3 relating to a qualifying event, second qualifying event, or determination of disability by the Social Security Administration regarding a covered employee, qualified beneficiary, or other individual and determines that the individual is not entitled to continuation coverage under part 6 of title I of the Act, the administrator shall provide to such individual an explanation as to why the individual is not entitled to continuation coverage.

(2) The notice required by this paragraph (c) shall be written in a manner calculated to be understood by the average plan participant and shall be furnished by the administrator in accordance with the time frame set out in paragraph (b) of this section that would apply if the administrator received a notice of qualifying event and determined that the individual was entitled to continuation coverage.

(d) *Notice of termination of continuation coverage.* (1) The administrator of a plan that is providing continuation

coverage to one or more qualified beneficiaries with respect to a qualifying event shall provide, in accordance with this paragraph (d), notice to each such qualified beneficiary of any termination of continuation coverage that takes effect earlier than the end of the maximum period of continuation coverage applicable to such qualifying event.

(2) The notice required by this paragraph (d) shall be written in a manner calculated to be understood by the average plan participant and shall contain the following information:

(i) The reason that continuation coverage has terminated earlier than the end of the maximum period of continuation coverage applicable to such qualifying event;

(ii) The date of termination of continuation coverage; and

(iii) Any rights the qualified beneficiary may have under the plan or under applicable law to elect an alternative group or individual coverage, such as a conversion right.

(3) The notice required by this paragraph (d) shall be furnished by the administrator as soon as practicable following the administrator's determination that continuation coverage shall terminate.

(e) *Special notice rules.* The notices required by paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section shall be furnished to each qualified beneficiary or individual, except that:

(1) An administrator may provide notice to a covered employee and the covered employee's spouse by furnishing a single notice addressed to both the covered employee and the covered employee's spouse, if, on the basis of the most recent information available to the plan, the covered employee's spouse resides at the same location as the covered employee; and

(2) An administrator may provide notice to each qualified beneficiary who is the dependent child of a covered employee by furnishing a single notice to the covered employee or the covered employee's spouse, if, on the basis of the most recent information available to the plan, the dependent child resides at the same location as the individual to whom such notice is provided.

(f) *Delivery of notice.* The notices required by this section shall be furnished in any manner consistent with the requirements of § 2520.104b–1 of this chapter, including paragraph (c) of that section relating to the use of electronic media.

(g) *Model notice.* The appendix to this section contains a model notice that is intended to assist administrators in discharging the notice obligations of paragraph (b) of this section. Use of the model notice is not mandatory. The model notice reflects the requirements of this section as they would apply to single-employer group health plans and must be modified if used to provide notice with respect to other types of group health plans, such as multiemployer plans or plans established and maintained by employee organizations for their members. In order to use the model notice, administrators must appropriately add relevant information where indicated in the model notice, select among alternative language and supplement the model notice to reflect applicable plan provisions. Items of information that are not applicable to a particular plan may be deleted. Use of the model notice, appropriately modified and supplemented, will be deemed to satisfy the notice content requirements of paragraph (b)(4) of this section.

(h) *Applicability.* This section shall apply to any notice obligation described in this section that arises on or after the first day of the first plan year beginning on or after November 26, 2004.

APPENDIX TO § 2590.606-4

MODEL COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE ELECTION NOTICE
(For use by single-employer group health plans)

[*Enter date of notice*]

Dear: [*Identify the qualified beneficiary(ies), by name or status*]

This notice contains important information about your right to continue your health care coverage in the [*enter name of group health plan*] (the Plan). Please read the information contained in this notice very carefully.

To elect COBRA continuation coverage, follow the instructions on the next page to complete the enclosed Election Form and submit it to us.

If you do not elect COBRA continuation coverage, your coverage under the Plan will end on [*enter date*] due to [*check appropriate box*]:

☐ End of employment
☐ Death of employee
☐ Entitlement to Medicare
☐ Reduction in hours of employment
☐ Divorce or legal separation
☐ Loss of dependent child status

Each person ("qualified beneficiary") in the category(ies) checked below is entitled to elect COBRA continuation coverage, which will continue group health care coverage under the Plan for up to ___ months [*enter* 18 *or* 36*, as appropriate and check appropriate box or boxes; names may be added*]:

☐ Employee or former employee
☐ Spouse or former spouse
☐ Dependent child(ren) covered under the Plan on the day before the event that caused the loss of coverage
☐ Child who is losing coverage under the Plan because he or she is no longer a dependent under the Plan

If elected, COBRA continuation coverage will begin on [*enter date*] and can last until [*enter date*]. [*Add, if appropriate:* You may elect any of the following options for COBRA continuation coverage: [*list available coverage options*].

COBRA continuation coverage will cost: [*enter amount each qualified beneficiary will be required to pay for each option per month of coverage and any other permitted coverage periods.*] You do not have to send any payment with the Election Form. Important additional information about payment for COBRA continuation coverage is included in the pages following the Election Form.

If you have any questions about this notice or your rights to COBRA continuation coverage, you should contact [*enter name of party responsible for COBRA administration for the Plan, with telephone number and address*].

COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE ELECTION FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: To elect COBRA continuation coverage, complete this Election Form and return it to us. Under federal law, you must have 60 days after the date of this notice to decide whether you want to elect COBRA continuation coverage under the Plan.

Send completed Election Form to: [*Enter Name and Address*]

This Election Form must be completed and returned by mail [*or describe other means of submission and due date*]. If mailed, it must be post-marked no later than [*enter date*].

If you do not submit a completed Election Form by the due date shown above, you will lose your right to elect COBRA continuation coverage. If you reject COBRA continuation coverage before the due date, you may change your mind as long as you furnish a completed Election Form before the due date. However, if you change your mind after first rejecting COBRA continuation coverage, your COBRA continuation coverage will begin on the date you furnish the completed Election Form.

Read the important information about your rights included in the pages after the Election Form.

I (We) elect COBRA continuation coverage in the [*enter name of plan*] (the Plan) as indicated below:

Name Date of Birth Relationship to Employee SSN (or other identifier)

a. _____

[*Add if appropriate:* Coverage option elected: _____]

b. _____

[*Add if appropriate:* Coverage option elected: _____]

c. _____

[*Add if appropriate:* Coverage option elected: _____]

_____ _____
Signature Date

_____ _____
Print Name Relationship to individual(s) listed above

_____

_____

_____ _____
Print Address Telephone number

IMPORTANT INFORMATION
ABOUT YOUR COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE RIGHTS

What is continuation coverage?

Federal law requires that most group health plans (including this Plan) give employees and their families the opportunity to continue their health care coverage when there is a "qualifying event" that would result in a loss of coverage under an employer's plan. Depending on the type of qualifying event, "qualified beneficiaries" can include the employee (or retired employee) covered under the group health plan, the covered employee's spouse, and the dependent children of the covered employee.

Continuation coverage is the same coverage that the Plan gives to other participants or beneficiaries under the Plan who are not receiving continuation coverage. Each qualified beneficiary who elects continuation coverage will have the same rights under the Plan as other participants or beneficiaries covered under the Plan, including [*add if applicable:* open enrollment and] special enrollment rights.

How long will continuation coverage last?

In the case of a loss of coverage due to end of employment or reduction in hours of employment, coverage generally may be continued only for up to a total of 18 months. In the case of losses of coverage due to an employee's death, divorce or legal separation, the employee's becoming entitled to Medicare benefits or a dependent child ceasing to be a dependent under the terms of the plan, coverage may be continued for up to a total of 36 months. When the qualifying event is the end of employment or reduction of the employee's hours of employment, and the employee became entitled to Medicare benefits less than 18 months before the qualifying event, COBRA continuation coverage for qualified beneficiaries other than the employee lasts until 36 months after the date of Medicare entitlement. This notice shows the maximum period of continuation coverage available to the qualified beneficiaries.

Continuation coverage will be terminated before the end of the maximum period if:

- any required premium is not paid in full on time,
- a qualified beneficiary becomes covered, after electing continuation coverage, under another group health plan that does not impose any pre-existing condition exclusion for a pre-existing condition of the qualified beneficiary,
- a qualified beneficiary becomes entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both) after electing continuation coverage, or
- the employer ceases to provide any group health plan for its employees.

Continuation coverage may also be terminated for any reason the Plan would terminate coverage of a participant or beneficiary not receiving continuation coverage (such as fraud).

[*If the maximum period shown on page 1 of this notice is less than 36 months, add the following three paragraphs:*]

How can you extend the length of COBRA continuation coverage?

If you elect continuation coverage, an extension of the maximum period of coverage may be available if a qualified beneficiary is disabled or a second qualifying event occurs. You must notify [*enter name of party responsible for COBRA administration*] of a disability or a second qualifying event in order to extend the period of continuation coverage. Failure to provide notice of a disability or second qualifying event may affect the right to extend the period of continuation coverage.

Disability

An 11-month extension of coverage may be available if any of the qualified beneficiaries is determined by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to be disabled. The disability has to have started at some time before the 60th day of COBRA continuation coverage and must last at least until the end of the 18-month period of continuation coverage. [*Describe Plan provisions for requiring notice of disability determination, including time frames and procedures.*] Each qualified beneficiary who has elected continuation coverage will be entitled to the 11-month disability extension if one of them qualifies. If the qualified beneficiary is determined by SSA to no longer be disabled, you must notify the Plan of that fact within 30 days after SSA's determination.

Second Qualifying Event

An 18-month extension of coverage will be available to spouses and dependent children who elect continuation coverage if a second qualifying event occurs during the first 18 months of continuation coverage. The maximum amount of continuation coverage available when a second qualifying event occurs is 36 months. Such second qualifying events may include the death of a covered employee, divorce or separation from the covered employee, the covered employee's becoming entitled to Medicare benefits (under Part A, Part B, or both), or a dependent child's ceasing to be eligible for coverage as a dependent under the Plan. These events can be a second qualifying event only if they would have caused the qualified beneficiary to lose coverage under the Plan if the first qualifying event had not occurred. You must notify the Plan within 60 days after a second qualifying event occurs if you want to extend your continuation coverage.

How can you elect COBRA continuation coverage?

To elect continuation coverage, you must complete the Election Form and furnish it according to the directions on the form. Each qualified beneficiary has a separate right to elect continuation coverage. For example, the employee's spouse may elect continuation coverage even if the employee does not. Continuation coverage may be elected for only one, several, or for all dependent children who are qualified beneficiaries. A parent may elect to continue coverage on behalf of any dependent children. The employee or the employee's spouse can elect continuation coverage on behalf of all of the qualified beneficiaries.

In considering whether to elect continuation coverage, you should take into account that a failure to continue your group health coverage will affect your future rights under federal law. First, you can lose the right to avoid having pre-existing condition exclusions applied to you by other group health plans if you have more than a 63-day gap in health coverage, and election of continuation coverage may help you not have such a gap. Second, you will lose the guaranteed right to purchase individual health insurance policies that do not impose such pre-existing condition exclusions if you do not get continuation coverage for the maximum time available to you. Finally, you should take into account that you have special enrollment rights under federal law. You have the right to request special enrollment in another group health plan for which you are otherwise eligible (such as a plan sponsored by your spouse's employer) within 30 days after your group health coverage ends because of the qualifying event listed above. You will also have the same special enrollment right at the end of continuation coverage if you get continuation coverage for the maximum time available to you.

How much does COBRA continuation coverage cost?

Generally, each qualified beneficiary may be required to pay the entire cost of continuation coverage. The amount a qualified beneficiary may be required to pay may not exceed 102 percent (or, in the case of an extension of continuation coverage due to a disability, 150 percent) of the cost to the group health plan (including both employer and employee contributions) for coverage of a similarly situated plan participant or beneficiary who is not receiving continuation coverage. The required payment for each continuation coverage period for each option is described in this notice.

[*If employees might be eligible for trade adjustment assistance, the following information may be added*: The Trade Act of 2002 created a new tax credit for certain individuals who become eligible for trade adjustment assistance and for certain retired employees who are receiving pension payments from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) (eligible individuals). Under the new tax provisions, eligible individuals can either take a tax credit or get advance payment of 65% of premiums paid for qualified health insurance, including continuation coverage. If you have questions about these new tax provisions, you may call the Health Coverage Tax Credit Customer Contact Center toll-free at 1-866-628-4282. TTD/TTY callers may call toll-free at 1-866-626-4282. More information about the Trade Act is also available at www.doleta.gov/tradeact/2002act_index.asp.

When and how must payment for COBRA continuation coverage be made?

First payment for continuation coverage

If you elect continuation coverage, you do not have to send any payment with the Election Form. However, you must make your first payment for continuation coverage not later than 45 days after the date of your election. (This is the date the Election Notice is post-marked, if mailed.) If you do not make your first payment for continuation coverage in full not later than 45 days after the date of your election, you will lose all continuation coverage rights under the Plan. You are responsible for making sure that the amount of your first payment is correct. You may contact

[*enter appropriate contact information, e.g., the Plan Administrator or other party responsible for COBRA administration under the Plan*] to confirm the correct amount of your first payment.

Periodic payments for continuation coverage

After you make your first payment for continuation coverage, you will be required to make periodic payments for each subsequent coverage period. The amount due for each coverage period for each qualified beneficiary is shown in this notice. The periodic payments can be made on a monthly basis. Under the Plan, each of these periodic payments for continuation coverage is due on the [*enter due day for each monthly payment*] for that coverage period. [*If Plan offers other payment schedules, enter with appropriate dates:* You may instead make payments for continuation coverage for the following coverage periods, due on the following dates:]. If you make a periodic payment on or before the first day of the coverage period to which it applies, your coverage under the Plan will continue for that coverage period without any break. The Plan [*select one:* will *or* will not] send periodic notices of payments due for these coverage periods.

Grace periods for periodic payments

Although periodic payments are due on the dates shown above, you will be given a grace period of 30 days after the first day of the coverage period [*or enter longer period permitted by Plan*] to make each periodic payment. Your continuation coverage will be provided for each coverage period as long as payment for that coverage period is made before the end of the grace period for that payment. [*If Plan suspends coverage during grace period for nonpayment, enter and modify as necessary:* 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, your coverage under the Plan will be suspended as of the first day of the coverage period and then retroactively reinstated (going back to the first day of the coverage period) when the periodic payment is received. This means that any claim you submit for benefits while your coverage is suspended may be denied and may have to be resubmitted once your coverage is reinstated.]

If you fail to make a periodic payment before the end of the grace period for that coverage period, you will lose all rights to continuation coverage under the Plan.

Your first payment and all periodic payments for continuation coverage should be sent to:

[*enter appropriate payment address*]

For more information

This notice does not fully describe continuation coverage or other rights under the Plan. More information about continuation coverage and your rights under the Plan is available in your summary plan description or from the Plan Administrator.

If you have any questions concerning the information in this notice, your rights to coverage, or if you want a copy of your summary plan description, you should contact [*enter name of party responsible for COBRA administration for the Plan, with telephone number and address*].

For more information about your rights under ERISA, including COBRA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and other laws affecting group health plans, contact the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) in your area or visit the EBSA website at www.dol.gov/ebsa. (Addresses and phone numbers of Regional and District EBSA Offices are available through EBSA's website.)

Keep Your Plan Informed of Address Changes

In order to protect your and your family's rights, you should keep the Plan Administrator informed of any changes in your address and the addresses of family members. You should also keep a copy, for your records, of any notices you send to the Plan Administrator.

[69 FR 30097, May 26, 2004; 69 FR 34921, June 23, 2004]

§ 2590.609–1 [Reserved]

§ 2590.609–2 National Medical Support Notice.

(a) This section promulgates the National Medical Support Notice (the Notice), as mandated by section 401(b) of the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 (Pub. L. 105–200). If the Notice is appropriately completed and satisfies paragraphs (3) and (4) of section 609(a) of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), the Notice is deemed to be a qualified medical child support order (QMCSO) pursuant to ERISA section 609(a)(5)(C). Section 609(a) of ERISA delineates the rights and obligations of the alternate recipient (child), the participant, and the group health plan under a QMCSO. A copy of the Notice is available on the Internet at *http://www.dol.gov/ebsa*.

(b) For purposes of this section, a plan administrator shall find that a Notice is appropriately completed if it contains the name of an Issuing Agency, the name and mailing address (if any) of an employee who is a participant under the plan, the name and mailing address of one or more alternate recipient(s) (child(ren) of the participant) (or the name and address of a substituted official or agency which has been substituted for the mailing address of the alternate recipient(s)), and identifies an underlying child support order.

(c)(1) Under section 609(a)(3)(A) of ERISA, in order to be qualified, a medical child support order must clearly specify the name and the last known mailing address (if any) of the participant and the name and mailing address of each alternate recipient covered by the order, except that, to the extent provided in the order, the name and mailing address of an official of a State or a political subdivision thereof may be substituted for the mailing address of any such alternate recipient. Section 609(a)(3)(B) of ERISA requires a reasonable description of the type of coverage to be provided to each such alternate recipient, or the manner in which such type of coverage is to be determined. Section 609(a)(3)(C) of ERISA requires that the order specify the period to which such order applies.

(2) The Notice satisfies ERISA section 609(a)(3)(A) by including the necessary identifying information described in § 2590.609–2(b).

(3) The Notice satisfies ERISA section 609(a)(3)(B) by having the Issuing Agency identify either the specific type of coverage or all available group health coverage. If an employer receives a Notice that does not designate either specific type(s) of coverage or all available coverage, the employer and plan administrator should assume that all are designated. The Notice further satisfies ERISA section 609(a)(3)(B) by instructing the plan administrator that if a group health plan has multiple options and the participant is not enrolled, the Issuing Agency will make a selection after the Notice is qualified, and, if the Issuing Agency does not respond within 20 days, the child will be enrolled under the plan's default option (if any).

(4) Section 609(a)(3)(C) of ERISA is satisfied because the Notice specifies that the period of coverage may only