

Benefits Buzz

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DID YOU KNOW?

On April 15, the "Continuing Extension Act of 2010" was signed into law, providing a further extension of eligibility for the COBRA subsidy enacted last year as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The COBRA subsidy is now available for involuntary terminations through May 31, 2010.

Employer-provided notices must be modified to include the additional subsidy period and the ability to reinstate COBRA for affected individuals.



CDHPs Popular Among Small Employers

According to a study by the American Association of Preferred Provider Organization, consumer-directed health plans (CDHPs) were the only type of health insurance plan that grew in 2009, with an enrollment increase of 27 percent.

A major reason for this trend was the increase in CDHP enrollment among small employers (up 6 percent), a product of smaller employers and their employees looking to take advantage of cost-saving opportunities within the consumer-driven plans.

In fact, small employers have now surpassed large employers in CDHP enrollments as a percentage of their covered employees.

Breaks for Nursing Mothers Now Law

Among its many components, the recently passed health care reform bill included a provision that modifies the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to require employers to provide reasonable break time and a private place for female employees to express milk after giving birth. There are five requirements that employers must abide by:

1. Employers must provide reasonable break time for nursing mothers.
 2. A private place other than a bathroom must be provided for the breaks.
 3. Compensation during the breaks is not required.
 4. Small employers need not comply if doing so would present an "undue hardship."
 5. State laws that provide greater protection to nursing mothers still apply.
- The section of the law with this provision took effect on March 23, 2010, so employers must immediately take action to comply with this law (except those in a state that already mandates breaks for nursing mothers). Employers should:
- ✓ Identify one or more private locations for nursing mothers.
 - ✓ Review and modify relevant policies and procedures, including break policies, breast-feeding policies and employee handbooks.
 - ✓ Communicate with managers supervisors about the changes.