



# COBRA Corner

OCTOBER 2007

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 9

## **Trivia:**

*How many COBRA members are currently covered under UC sponsored health plans*

*Answer: Approx. 4,500*

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## **COBRA Open Enrollment**

The IRS COBRA regulations provide that qualified beneficiaries receiving COBRA continuation coverage must be given the same open enrollment rights that are available to similarly situated active employees. This means that qualified beneficiaries may, during their COBRA continuation period, enroll themselves (or family members) in another program (medical, dental, and/or vision plan) or change their medical and/or dental plan. The Health Care Reimbursement Account is an exception – COBRA beneficiaries are only able to continue after-tax contributions through the end of the year in which the qualifying event happens and may not re-enroll during Open Enrollment.

### **Right to Change Applies to Each Qualified Beneficiary**

Each qualified beneficiary has separate open enrollment rights. This is true even if the spouse/partner and family members of active employees under the plan must be covered under the same plan as the employee.

Example: Louie, along with his spouse and two children, elect COBRA under UC-sponsored health plans. During the Open Enrollment period, each of the four qualified beneficiaries must be offered the opportunity to transfer to another plan (as though each qualified beneficiary were an individual employee). For example, each of Louie's family members could choose coverage under a separate plan, even though the family members of employed individuals could not choose to do so.

### **UC Open Enrollment for 2008:**

Qualified beneficiaries may enroll in another UC-sponsored program if:

- they were eligible for the program at the time of the original qualifying event, and
- they elected COBRA continuation coverage for at least one of the health programs at that time and have been continuously enrolled, and
- they will still be within their maximum COBRA continuation coverage period on January 1.

UCOP will be sending open enrollment materials to all COBRA qualified beneficiaries. The information will also be posted on the website. The contents of the mailing will include:

1. Cover letter and Open Enrollment announcement
2. *COBRA Continuation Open Enrollment and Change* form (UBEN 108)
3. *Mailing Addresses and Premium Information* for 2008

To make changes, qualified beneficiaries must complete and mail a copy of the UBEN 108 directly to the new plan (if transferring to another plan) or directly to their existing plan (if adding eligible family member). The form must be received no later than November 27, 2007. Note. Changes made during Open Enrollment do not alter the length of COBRA continuation coverage.