



STATE OF VERMONT

Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities & Health Care Administration (BISHCA)

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Release Date: May 6, 2008
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About to Graduate from College? Don't Neglect Health Insurance

Montpelier, VT--If you find yourself between college graduation and a job, or still looking for work, or just taking a break until you figure out your life, there is one thing you should not let slide in the interim, and that's health insurance. You may be young and healthy, and think that you won't become hurt or sick, but it can happen. It's a dangerous wager to let your insurance lapse. A serious accident or illness could snarl you in debt for decades. If you had insurance through college or under your parents' policy while in school, do you have any idea when that coverage ends exactly? Did you know that letting your policy lapse may affect your options for continuing coverage? Here is some general information about health insurance you can consider:

Some health insurers terminate eligibility for coverage upon graduation, while others set a particular age limit. If you have had a student policy, find out whether you have an option to extend it until you can start a new plan. Be sure to comply with any cancellation requirements if you are changing plans. If you have any pre-existing medical conditions, a lapse in coverage may result in an exclusion or postponement of coverage for those conditions under your next health plan, whether through a new job or if you are self-employed. Research your options for avoiding a lapse in coverage.

Know Your Options

Some of the health insurance options available for recent graduates are:

Vermont's Green Mountain Health Care and Catamount Health Programs

The member services representatives at Green Mountain Care can help you understand Catamount Health Insurance eligibility and the Premium Assistance Program. You can contact them directly at: 1 (800) 250-8427, TDD: 1 (888) 834-7898. If you find that you will be eligible, apply right away (it may take a few months to process your application). You can also research their website at: www.GreenMountainCare.org

You may qualify for Catamount Health Insurance (which helps provide access to affordable health insurance for Vermonters) when you do graduate. There are some eligibility rules about who may purchase Catamount Health Insurance that are directed to graduating students (i.e., if you were getting your insurance through college and no longer do so because you graduated, or are no longer a dependent on your parent or caretaker's health insurance any more).

Continuation of group insurance - (called "COBRA" under federal law)

If you have been covered under your parents' health insurance policy while you were in college, you should check to see whether you can extend your parents' coverage for a period of time under state or federal continuation law. This will enable you to keep the same coverage, but you will have to pay the full premium.

Individual and Small Group Health Insurance

Individual health insurance is available for purchase if you are not eligible for employer-sponsored health insurance. Vermonters who are self-employed may purchase small group insurance, directly or through an association. In general, you will pay lower premiums for a higher-deductible policy, but it may only cover the most expensive (often serious or catastrophic) health care costs. For a copy of “Consumer Tips: Shopping for Individual or Small Group Health Insurance in Vermont,” visit our website (www.bishca.state.vt.us) and click on “Health Care Administration” and then Consumer Publications. Or, call 800-631-7788.

Beware: Is it actual health insurance?

There are a number of products out there that sound tempting but that are not real health insurance. For example, discount health plans refer to a type of “buyers club” that markets reduced-rate health care services. These programs may offer discounts on health care and other services from hospitals, doctors, dentists, as well as discounts on prescription drugs, vision services, ambulance and other types of specialty medical care. This is not health insurance.

Check the insurance company and agent with BISHCA to confirm that the product is legitimate and that they are licensed to sell health insurance in your state. You can also check the Consumer Information Source (CIS) at: www.naic.org/consumer_home.htm on the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) website for statistics about consumer complaints filed against insurance companies.

Research to Obtain More Information

To learn more about the different kinds of health insurance, visit our website (Go to www.bishca.state.vt.us, click on Health Care Administration Consumer Help & Info, or call Health Insurance Consumer Services at 800-631-7788.

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