



Dependent Coverage Explained

A key part of the new health care law makes health coverage easier to get by requiring that, if employers and insurance companies offer family coverage, they must continue that option for adult children up to age 26. This expansion of “dependent” coverage could apply to your family.

The Overview:

- The dependent coverage expansion allows your adult children under age 26 to stay on your employer-provided or private health insurance plan.
 - *Your children can be covered even if they are married or have a child, but their spouses and children **cannot** be covered under your plan.*
 - *To qualify for coverage through your plan, adult children must not be eligible for another employer sponsored insurance plan through their employer or spouse.*
 - *Your adult children are eligible for your health insurance plan whether or not they are a student and regardless of whether they file taxes independently (this is a big change from the previous state laws).*
- Your adult children are eligible to enroll on your insurance at the start of your plan's next open enrollment period beginning on or after September 23, 2010. For most employer-based insurance, that will be on January 1, 2011. But it could be later. Talk to your employer about the start date at your workplace.
- Insurance providers must provide you, the parent, with written notice of when the start of the next plan year is and inform you that your adult child can enroll within 30 days of the next plan year. **WATCH OUT FOR THE NOTICE!** This written notice can be given to you along with other standard insurance materials. Be proactive! Ask your employer/provider when the next plan year after September 23, 2010 is so you do not miss the enrollment opportunity.
 - *This is so important it is worth repeating. Adult children will have a 30-day special enrollment opportunity to re-enroll on your insurance. If your children miss this opportunity, they will have to wait until the next open enrollment period. That likely will not be for another year!*
- Your insurance must charge the same to cover your adult child as they would to cover any younger child. No discrimination allowed.
- Some states already have laws that require insurers to go beyond age 26 for dependent coverage. In those states, you will likely be able to cover your child on your plan even beyond their age 26. Find out the laws in your state.