

year 2006, see section 7 of Pub. L. 108-496, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

§ 8984. Benefits

(a) The Office may prescribe reasonable minimum standards for enhanced vision benefits plans offered under this chapter and for qualified companies offering the plans.

(b) Each contract may include more than 1 level of benefits that shall be made available to all eligible individuals.

(c) The benefits to be provided under enhanced vision benefits plans under this chapter may be of the following types:

- (1) Diagnostic (to include refractive services).
- (2) Preventive.
- (3) Eyewear.

(d) A contract approved under this chapter shall require the qualified company to cover the geographic service delivery area specified by the Office. The Office shall require qualified companies to include visually underserved areas in their service delivery areas.

(e) If an individual has vision coverage under a health benefits plan under chapter 89 and also has coverage under a plan under this chapter, the health benefits plan under chapter 89 shall be the first payor of any benefit payments.

(Added Pub. L. 108-496, § 3, Dec. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 4008.)

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Dec. 23, 2004, and applicable to contracts that take effect with respect to the calendar year 2006, see section 7 of Pub. L. 108-496, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

§ 8985. Information to individuals eligible to enroll

(a) The qualified companies at the direction and with the approval of the Office, shall make available to each individual eligible to enroll in a vision benefits plan information on services and benefits (including maximums, limitations, and exclusions), that the Office considers necessary to enable the individual to make an informed decision about electing coverage.

(b) The Office shall make available to each individual eligible to enroll in a vision benefits plan, information on services and benefits provided by qualified companies participating under chapter 89.

(Added Pub. L. 108-496, § 3, Dec. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 4008.)

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Dec. 23, 2004, and applicable to contracts that take effect with respect to the calendar year 2006, see section 7 of Pub. L. 108-496, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

§ 8986. Election of coverage

(a) An eligible individual may enroll in a vision benefits plan for self-only, self plus one, or for self and family. If an eligible individual has

a spouse who is also eligible to enroll, either spouse, but not both, may enroll for self plus one or self and family. An individual may not be enrolled both as an employee, annuitant, or other individual eligible to enroll and as a member of the family.

(b) The Office shall prescribe regulations under which—

(1) an eligible individual may enroll in a vision benefits plan; and

(2) an enrolled individual may change the self-only, self plus one, or self and family coverage of that individual.

(c)(1) Regulations under subsection (b) shall permit an eligible individual to cancel or transfer the enrollment of that individual to another vision benefits plan—

(A) before the start of any contract term in which there is a change in rates charged or benefits provided, in which a new plan is offered, or in which an existing plan is terminated; or

(B) during other times and under other circumstances specified by the Office.

(2) A transfer under paragraph (1) shall be subject to waiting periods provided under a new plan.

(d) Coverage under a vision benefits plan under this chapter for any employee or a covered TRICARE-eligible individual enrolled in such a plan and who, as a result of a lapse in appropriations, is furloughed or excepted from furlough and working without pay shall continue during such lapse and may not be cancelled as a result of nonpayment of premiums or other periodic charges due to such lapse.

(Added Pub. L. 108-496, § 3, Dec. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 4008; amended Pub. L. 116-92, div. A, title XI, § 1111(a)(2), Dec. 20, 2019, 133 Stat. 1601.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

2019—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 116-92 added subsec. (d).

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2019 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 116-92 applicable to any contract for supplemental vision insurance under this chapter entered into before, on, or after Dec. 20, 2019, see section 1111(c) of Pub. L. 116-92, set out as a note under section 8956 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Dec. 23, 2004, and applicable to contracts that take effect with respect to the calendar year 2006, see section 7 of Pub. L. 108-496, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

§ 8987. Coverage of restored survivor or disability annuitants

A surviving spouse, disability annuitant, or surviving child whose annuity is terminated and is later restored, may continue enrollment in a vision benefits plan subject to the terms and conditions prescribed in regulations issued by the Office.

(Added Pub. L. 108-496, § 3, Dec. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 4009.)

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Dec. 23, 2004, and applicable to contracts that take effect with respect to the calendar year 2006, see section 7 of Pub. L. 108-496, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

§ 8988. Premiums

(a) Each eligible individual obtaining supplemental vision coverage under this chapter shall be responsible for 100 percent of the premiums for such coverage.

(b) The Office shall prescribe regulations specifying the terms and conditions under which individuals are required to pay the premiums for enrollment.

(c) The amount necessary to pay the premiums for enrollment may—

(1) in the case of an employee, be withheld from the pay of such an employee;

(2) in the case of an annuitant, be withheld from the annuity of such an annuitant;

(3) in the case of a covered TRICARE-eligible individual who receives pay from the Federal Government or an annuity from the Federal Government due to the death of a member of the uniformed services (as defined in section 101 of title 10), and is not a former spouse of a member of the uniformed services, be withheld from—

(A) the pay (including retired pay) of such individual; or

(B) the annuity paid to such individual; or

(4) in the case of a covered TRICARE-eligible individual who is not described in paragraph (3), be billed to such individual directly.

(d) All amounts withheld under this section shall be paid directly to the qualified company.

(e) Each participating qualified company shall maintain accounting records that contain such information and reports as the Office may require.

(f)(1) The Employee Health Benefits Fund is available, without fiscal year limitation, for reasonable expenses incurred by the Office in administering this chapter before the first day of the first contract period, including reasonable implementation costs.

(2)(A) There is established in the Employees Health Benefits Fund a Vision Benefits Administrative Account, which shall be available to the Office, without fiscal year limitation, to defray reasonable expenses incurred by the Office in administering this chapter after the start of the first contract year.

(B) A contract under this chapter shall include appropriate provisions under which the qualified company involved shall, during each year, make such periodic contributions to the Vision Benefits Administrative Account as necessary to ensure that the reasonable anticipated expenses of the Office in administering this chapter during such year are defrayed.

(Added Pub. L. 108-496, § 3, Dec. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 4009; amended Pub. L. 114-328, div. A, title VII, § 715(b)(2), Dec. 23, 2016, 130 Stat. 2222.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

2016—Subsec. (c)(3), (4). Pub. L. 114-328 added pars. (3) and (4).

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2016 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 114-328 applicable with respect to the first contract year for chapter 89A or 89B of this title, as applicable, that begins on or after Jan. 1, 2018, see section 715(c) of Pub. L. 114-328, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Dec. 23, 2004, and applicable to contracts that take effect with respect to the calendar year 2006, see section 7 of Pub. L. 108-496, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

§ 8989. Preemption

The terms of any contract that relate to the nature, provision, or extent of coverage or benefits (including payments with respect to benefits) shall supersede and preempt any State or local law, or any regulation issued thereunder, which relates to vision benefits, insurance, plans, or contracts.

(Added Pub. L. 108-496, § 3, Dec. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 4010.)

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Dec. 23, 2004, and applicable to contracts that take effect with respect to the calendar year 2006, see section 7 of Pub. L. 108-496, set out as a note under section 8951 of this title.

§ 8990. Studies, reports, and audits

(a) Each contract shall contain provisions requiring the qualified company to—

(1) furnish such reasonable reports as the Office determines to be necessary to enable it to carry out its functions under this chapter; and

(2) permit the Office and representatives of the Government Accountability Office to examine such records of the qualified company as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

(b) Each Federal agency shall keep such records, make such certifications, and furnish the Office, the qualified company, or both, with such information and reports as the Office may require.

(c) The Office shall conduct periodic reviews of plans under this chapter, including a comparison of the vision benefits available under chapter 89, to ensure the competitiveness of plans under this chapter. The Office shall cooperate with the Government Accountability Office to provide periodic evaluations of the program.

(Added Pub. L. 108-496, § 3, Dec. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 4010.)

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective Dec. 23, 2004, and applicable to contracts that take effect with respect to the calendar