

Figure: 28 TAC §3.3510(d)

Form COB TX

Coordination of This Contract's Benefits with Other Benefits

The Coordination of Benefits (COB) provision applies when a person has health care coverage under more than one plan. Plan is defined below.

The order of benefit determination rules govern the order in which each plan will pay a claim for benefits. The plan that pays first is called the primary plan. The primary plan must pay benefits in accord with its policy terms without regard to the possibility that another plan may cover some expenses. The plan that pays after the primary plan is the secondary plan. The secondary plan may reduce the benefits it pays so that payments from all plans equal 100 percent of the total allowable expense.

Definitions

- (a) A "plan" is any of the following that provides benefits or services for medical, dental, or vision care or treatment. If separate contracts are used to provide coordinated coverage for members of a group, the separate contracts are considered parts of the same plan and there is no COB among those separate contracts.
- (1) Plan includes: group, blanket, or franchise accident and health insurance policies; individual and group health maintenance organization evidences of coverage; individual accident and health insurance policies; individual and group preferred provider benefit plans and exclusive provider benefit plans; group insurance contracts, individual insurance contracts and subscriber contracts that pay or reimburse for the cost of dental care; a vision benefit plan that provides coverage for vision or eye care expenses; medical care components of individual and group long-term care contracts; limited benefit coverage that is not issued to supplement individual or group in-force policies; uninsured (i.e., self-funded or self-insured) arrangements of group or group-type coverage; the medical benefits coverage in automobile insurance contracts; and Medicare or other governmental benefits, as permitted by law.
 - (2) Plan does not include: disability income protection coverage; workers' compensation insurance coverage; hospital confinement indemnity coverage or other fixed indemnity coverage; specified disease coverage; supplemental benefit coverage; accident only coverage; specified accident coverage; school accident-type coverages that cover students for accidents only, including athletic injuries,

either on a "24-hour" or a "to and from school" basis; benefits provided in long-term care insurance contracts for non-medical services, for example, personal care, adult day care, homemaker services, assistance with activities of daily living, respite care, and custodial care or for contracts that pay a fixed daily benefit without regard to expenses incurred or the receipt of services; Medicare supplement policies; a state plan under Medicaid; a governmental plan that, by law, provides benefits that are in excess of those of any private insurance plan or other nongovernmental plan; or an individual accident and health insurance policy that is designed to fully integrate with other policies through a variable deductible.

Each contract for coverage under (a)(1) or (a)(2) is a separate plan. If a plan has two parts and COB rules apply only to one of the two, each of the parts is treated as a separate plan.

- (b) "This plan" means, in a COB provision, the part of the contract providing the health care benefits to which the COB provision applies and which may be reduced because of the benefits of other plans. Any other part of the contract providing health care benefits is separate from this plan. A contract may apply one COB provision to certain benefits, such as dental benefits, coordinating only with like benefits, and may apply other separate COB provisions to coordinate other benefits.

The order of benefit determination rules determine whether this plan is a primary plan or secondary plan when the person has health care coverage under more than one plan. When this plan is primary, it determines payment for its benefits first before those of any other plan without considering any other plan's benefits. When this plan is secondary, it determines its benefits after those of another plan and may reduce the benefits it pays so that all plan benefits equal 100 percent of the total allowable expense.

- (c) "Allowable expense" is a health care expense, including deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments, that is covered at least in part by any plan covering the person. When a plan provides benefits in the form of services, the reasonable cash value of each service will be considered an allowable expense and a benefit paid. An expense that is not covered by any plan covering the person is not an allowable expense. In addition, any expense that a health care provider or physician by law or in accord with a contractual agreement is prohibited from charging a covered person is not an allowable expense.

The following are examples of expenses that are not allowable expenses:

- (1) The difference between the cost of a semi-private hospital room and a private hospital room is not an allowable expense, unless one of the plans provides coverage for private hospital room expenses.

- (2) If a person is covered by two or more plans that do not have negotiated fees and compute their benefit payments based on the usual and customary fees, allowed amounts, or relative value schedule reimbursement methodology, or other similar reimbursement methodology, any amount in excess of the highest reimbursement amount for a specific benefit is not an allowable expense.
 - (3) If a person is covered by two or more plans that provide benefits or services on the basis of negotiated fees, an amount in excess of the highest of the negotiated fees is not an allowable expense.
 - (4) If a person is covered by one plan that does not have negotiated fees and that calculates its benefits or services based on usual and customary fees, allowed amounts, relative value schedule reimbursement methodology, or other similar reimbursement methodology, and another plan that provides its benefits or services based on negotiated fees, the primary plan's payment arrangement must be the allowable expense for all plans. However, if the health care provider or physician has contracted with the secondary plan to provide the benefit or service for a specific negotiated fee or payment amount that is different than the primary plan's payment arrangement and if the health care provider's or physician's contract permits, the negotiated fee or payment must be the allowable expense used by the secondary plan to determine its benefits.
 - (5) The amount of any benefit reduction by the primary plan because a covered person has failed to comply with the plan provisions is not an allowable expense. Examples of these types of plan provisions include second surgical opinions, prior authorization of admissions, and preferred health care provider and physician arrangements.
- (d) "Allowed amount" is the amount of a billed charge that a carrier determines to be covered for services provided by a nonpreferred health care provider or physician. The allowed amount includes both the carrier's payment and any applicable deductible, copayment, or coinsurance amounts for which the insured is responsible.
 - (e) "Closed panel plan" is a plan that provides health care benefits to covered persons primarily in the form of services through a panel of health care providers and physicians that have contracted with or are employed by the plan, and that excludes coverage for services provided by other health care providers and physicians, except in cases of emergency or referral by a panel member.
 - (f) "Custodial parent" is the parent with the right to designate the primary residence of a child by a court order under the Texas Family Code or other applicable law, or in the absence of a court order, is the parent with whom the child resides more than one-half of the calendar year, excluding any temporary visitation.

Order of Benefit Determination Rules

When a person is covered by two or more plans, the rules for determining the order of benefit payments are as follows:

- (a) The primary plan pays or provides its benefits according to its terms of coverage and without regard to the benefits under any other plan.
- (b) Except as provided in (c), a plan that does not contain a COB provision that is consistent with this policy is always primary unless the provisions of both plans state that the complying plan is primary.
- (c) Coverage that is obtained by virtue of membership in a group that is designed to supplement a part of a basic package of benefits and provides that this supplementary coverage must be excess to any other parts of the plan provided by the contract holder. Examples of these types of situations are major medical coverages that are superimposed over base plan hospital and surgical benefits, and insurance type coverages that are written in connection with a closed panel plan to provide out-of-network benefits.
- (d) A plan may consider the benefits paid or provided by another plan in calculating payment of its benefits only when it is secondary to that other plan.
- (e) If the primary plan is a closed panel plan and the secondary plan is not, the secondary plan must pay or provide benefits as if it were the primary plan when a covered person uses a noncontracted health care provider or physician, except for emergency services or authorized referrals that are paid or provided by the primary plan.
- (f) When multiple contracts providing coordinated coverage are treated as a single plan for the purposes of COB, this section applies only to the plan as a whole, and coordination among the component contracts is governed by the terms of the contracts. If more than one carrier pays or provides benefits under the plan, the carrier designated as primary within the plan must be responsible for the plan's compliance with this subchapter.
- (g) If a person is covered by more than one secondary plan, the order of benefit determination rules of this subchapter decide the order in which secondary plans' benefits are determined in relation to each other. Each secondary plan must take into consideration the benefits of the primary plan or plans and the benefits of any other plan that, under the rules of this contract, has its benefits determined before those of that secondary plan.

(h) Each plan determines its order of benefits using the first of the following rules that apply.

(1) Nondependent or Dependent. The plan that covers the person other than as a dependent, for example as an employee, member, policyholder, subscriber, or retiree, is the primary plan, and the plan that covers the person as a dependent is the secondary plan. However, if the person is a Medicare beneficiary and, as a result of federal law, Medicare is secondary to the plan covering the person as a dependent and primary to the plan covering the person as other than a dependent, then the order of benefits between the two plans is reversed so that the plan covering the person as an employee, member, policyholder, subscriber, or retiree is the secondary plan and the other plan is the primary plan. An example includes a retired employee.

(2) Dependent Child Covered Under More Than One Plan. Unless there is a court order stating otherwise, plans covering a dependent child must determine the order of benefits using the following rules that apply.

(A) For a dependent child whose parents are married or are living together, whether or not they have ever been married:

(i) The plan of the parent whose birthday falls earlier in the calendar year is the primary plan; or

(ii) If both parents have the same birthday, the plan that has covered the parent the longest is the primary plan.

(B) For a dependent child whose parents are divorced, separated, or not living together, whether or not they have ever been married:

(i) if a court order states that one of the parents is responsible for the dependent child's health care expenses or health care coverage and the plan of that parent has actual knowledge of those terms, that plan is primary. This rule applies to plan years commencing after the plan is given notice of the court decree.

(ii) if a court order states that both parents are responsible for the dependent child's health care expenses or health care coverage, the provisions of (h)(2)(A) must determine the order of benefits.

(iii) if a court order states that the parents have joint custody without specifying that one parent has responsibility for the health care expenses or health care coverage of the dependent child, the provisions of (h)(2)(A) must determine the order of benefits.

- (iv) if there is no court order allocating responsibility for the dependent child's health care expenses or health care coverage, the order of benefits for the child is as follows:
 - (I) the plan covering the custodial parent;
 - (II) the plan covering the spouse of the custodial parent;
 - (III) the plan covering the noncustodial parent; then
 - (IV) the plan covering the spouse of the noncustodial parent.
- (C) For a dependent child covered under more than one plan of individuals who are not the parents of the child, the provisions of (h)(2)(A) or (h)(2)(B) must determine the order of benefits as if those individuals were the parents of the child.
- (D) For a dependent child who has coverage under either or both parents' plans and has their own coverage as a dependent under a spouse's plan, (h)(5) applies.
- (E) In the event the dependent child's coverage under the spouse's plan began on the same date as the dependent child's coverage under either or both parents' plans, the order of benefits must be determined by applying the birthday rule in (h)(2)(A) to the dependent child's parent(s) and the dependent's spouse.
- (3) Active, Retired, or Laid-off Employee. The plan that covers a person as an active employee, that is, an employee who is neither laid off nor retired, is the primary plan. The plan that covers that same person as a retired or laid-off employee is the secondary plan. The same would hold true if a person is a dependent of an active employee and that same person is a dependent of a retired or laid-off employee. If the plan that covers the same person as a retired or laid-off employee or as a dependent of a retired or laid-off employee does not have this rule, and as a result, the plans do not agree on the order of benefits, this rule does not apply. This rule does not apply if (h)(1) can determine the order of benefits.
- (4) COBRA or State Continuation Coverage. If a person whose coverage is provided under COBRA or under a right of continuation provided by state or other federal law is covered under another plan, the plan covering the person as an employee, member, subscriber, or retiree or covering the person as a dependent of an employee, member, subscriber, or retiree is the primary plan, and the COBRA, state, or other federal continuation coverage is the secondary plan. If the other plan does not have this rule, and as a result, the plans do not agree on the order of benefits, this rule does not apply. This rule does not apply if (h)(1) can determine the order of benefits.

- (5) Longer or Shorter Length of Coverage. The plan that has covered the person as an employee, member, policyholder, subscriber, or retiree longer is the primary plan, and the plan that has covered the person the shorter period is the secondary plan.
- (6) If the preceding rules do not determine the order of benefits, the allowable expenses must be shared equally between the plans meeting the definition of plan. In addition, this plan will not pay more than it would have paid had it been the primary plan.

Effect on the Benefits of This Plan

- (a) When this plan is secondary, it may reduce its benefits so that the total benefits paid or provided by all plans are not more than the total allowable expenses. In determining the amount to be paid for any claim, the secondary plan will calculate the benefits it would have paid in the absence of other health care coverage and apply that calculated amount to any allowable expense under its plan that is unpaid by the primary plan. The secondary plan may then reduce its payment by the amount so that, when combined with the amount paid by the primary plan, the total benefits paid or provided by all plans for the claim equal 100 percent of the total allowable expense for that claim. In addition, the secondary plan must credit to its plan deductible any amounts it would have credited to its deductible in the absence of other health care coverage.
- (b) If a covered person is enrolled in two or more closed panel plans and if, for any reason, including the provision of service by a nonpanel provider, benefits are not payable by one closed panel plan, COB must not apply between that plan and other closed panel plans.

Compliance with Federal and State Laws Concerning Confidential Information

Certain facts about health care coverage and services are needed to apply these COB rules and to determine benefits payable under this plan and other plans. [Organization responsible for COB administration] will comply with federal and state law concerning confidential information for the purpose of applying these rules and determining benefits payable under this plan and other plans covering the person claiming benefits. Each person claiming benefits under this plan must give [Organization responsible for COB administration] any facts it needs to apply those rules and determine benefits.

Facility of Payment

A payment made under another plan may include an amount that should have been paid under this plan. If it does, [Organization responsible for COB administration] may pay that amount to the organization that made that payment. That amount will then be treated as though it were a benefit paid under this plan. [Organization responsible for COB administration] will not have to pay that amount again. The term "payment made" includes providing benefits in the form of services, in which case "payment made" means the reasonable cash value of the benefits provided in the form of services.

Right of Recovery

If the amount of the payments made by [Organization responsible for COB administration] is more than it should have paid under this COB provision, it may recover the excess from one or more of the persons it has paid or for whom it has paid or any other person or organization that may be responsible for the benefits or services provided for the covered person. The "amount of the payments made" includes the reasonable cash value of any benefits provided in the form of services.