

§ 58-65-60. Subscribers' contracts; required and prohibited provisions.

(a) Every contract made by a corporation subject to the provisions of this Article and Article 66 of this Chapter shall be for a period not to exceed 12 months, and no contract shall be made providing for the inception of benefits at a date later than one year from the date of the contract. Any such contract may provide that it shall be automatically renewed for a similar period unless there shall have been one month's prior written notice of termination by either the subscriber or the corporation.

(b) Contracts may be issued that entitle one or more persons to benefits under those contracts. Persons entitled to benefits under those contracts, other than the certificate holder, may only be the certificate holder's spouse, lawful or legally adopted child of the certificate holder or the certificate holder's spouse, or any other person who resides in the same household with the certificate holder and is dependent upon the certificate holder.

(c) Every contract entered into by any corporation subject to the provisions of this Article and Article 66 of this Chapter with any subscriber of the corporation shall be in writing and a certificate stating the terms and conditions of the contract shall be furnished to the subscriber to be kept by the subscriber. No such certificate form, other than to group subscribers of groups of 10 or more certificate holders or those issued pursuant to a master group contract covering 10 or more certificate holders shall be made, issued or delivered in this State unless it contains the following provisions, provided, however, groups between five and 10 certificate holders complying with and maintaining eligibility status under regulations approved by the Commissioner of Insurance for group enrollment may be cancelled if the group participation falls below the minimum participation of five certificate holders; or if the group takes other group hospital, medical or surgical coverage:

- (1) A statement of the amount payable to the corporation by the subscriber and the times at which and manner in which the required amount is to be paid; this provision may be inserted in the application rather than in the certificate. The application need not be attached to the certificate.
- (2) A statement of the nature of the benefits to be furnished and the period during which they will be furnished.
- (3) A statement of the terms and conditions, if any, upon which the contract may be cancelled or otherwise terminated at the option of either party. The statement shall be in the following language:
 - a. Renewability. – Any contract subject to the provisions of this subdivision is renewable at the option of the subscriber unless sufficient notice in writing of nonrenewal is mailed to the subscriber by the corporation addressed to the last address recorded with the corporation.
 - b. Sufficient notice. – The notice required shall be as follows:
 1. During the first year of any contract, or during the first year following any lapse and reinstatement, or reenrollment, a period of 30 days.
 2. During the second and subsequent years of continuous coverage, a number of full calendar months most nearly equivalent to one fourth the number of months of continuous coverage from the first anniversary of the date of issue or reinstatement or reenrollment, whichever date is more recent, to the date of mailing of the 30-day notice.
 3. No period of required notice shall exceed two years, and no renewal hereunder shall renew any contract for any period

beyond the required period of notice except by written agreement of the subscriber and corporation.

- c. Modifications, terminations, and cancellations. – The contract may be modified, terminated or cancelled by the corporation at any time at its option, upon any of the following:
 - 1. Nonpayment by the subscriber of fees or dues as required.
 - 2. Failure or refusal by the subscriber to comply with rate or benefit changes approved by the Commissioner under G.S. 58-65-45.
 - 3. Failure or refusal by the subscriber after 30 days' written notice to subscriber to transfer into a dental, health care, medical, or vision service plan serving the area to which the subscriber has changed residence and is eligible for or to which corporation is required to transfer by interplan agreement of transfer.
- (4) A statement that the contract includes the endorsement thereon and attached papers, if any, and together with the applications contains the entire contract.
- (5) A statement that if the subscriber defaults in making any payment under the contract, then the subsequent acceptance of a payment by the corporation at its home office shall reinstate the contract, but with respect to sickness and injury, only to cover such sickness as may be first manifested more than 10 days after the date of acceptance of the payment.
- (d) In every such contract made, issued or delivered in this State:
 - (1) All printed portions shall be plainly printed;
 - (2) The exceptions from the contract shall appear with the same prominence as the benefits to which they apply; and
 - (3) If the contract contains any provision purporting to make any portion of the articles, constitution or bylaws of the corporation a part of the contract, such portion shall be set forth in full.

(e) A service corporation may issue a master group contract with the approval of the Commissioner if the contract and the individual certificates issued to members of the group comply in substance to the other provisions of this Article and Article 66 of this Chapter. The contract may provide for the adjustment of the rate of the premium or benefits conferred as provided in the contract, and in accordance with an adjustment schedule filed with and approved by the Commissioner. If the contract is issued, altered or modified, the subscribers' contracts issued under that contract are altered or modified accordingly, all laws and clauses in subscribers' contracts to the contrary notwithstanding. Nothing in this Article and Article 66 of this Chapter shall be construed to prohibit or prevent the same. Forms of such contract shall at all times be furnished upon request of subscribers thereto.

(e1) Employees shall be added to the master group coverage no later than 90 days after their first day of employment. Employment shall be considered continuous and not be considered broken except for unexcused absences from work for reasons other than illness or injury. The term "employee" is defined as a nonseasonal person who works on a full-time basis, with a normal work week of 30 or more hours and who is otherwise eligible for coverage, but does not include a person who works on a part-time, temporary, or substitute basis.

(e2) Whenever an employer master group contract replaces another group contract, whether this contract was issued by a corporation under Articles 1 through 67 of this Chapter, the liability of the succeeding corporation for insuring persons covered under the previous group contract is (i) each person is eligible for coverage in accordance with the succeeding corporation's plan of benefits with respect to classes eligible and activity at work and nonconfinement rules must be covered by the succeeding corporation's plan of benefits; and (ii) each person not covered

under the succeeding corporation's plan of benefits in accordance with (i) above must nevertheless be covered by the succeeding corporation if that person was validly covered, including benefit extension, under the prior plan on the date of discontinuance and if the person is a member of the class of persons eligible for coverage under the succeeding corporation's plan.

(e3) When determining employee eligibility for a large employer, as defined in G.S. 58-68-25(10), an individual proprietor, owner, or operator shall be defined as an "employee" for the purpose of obtaining coverage under the employee group health plan and shall not be held to a minimum workweek requirement as imposed on other eligible employees.

(f) Any hospitalization contract renewed in the name of the subscriber during the grace period shall be construed to be a continuation of the contract first issued. (1941, c. 338, s. 7; 1947, c. 820, ss. 3, 4; 1955, c. 679, ss. 1-3; 1957, c. 1085, s. 1; 1961, c. 1149; 1989, c. 775, s. 4; 1991, c. 720, ss. 38, 88; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 837, s. 4; 1993, c. 408, s. 4; c. 409, s. 24; 1995, c. 507, s. 23A.1(e); 1997-259, s. 17; 2001-417, s. 12; 2005-223, s. 2(a); 2021-169, s. 1.)