

is a nonconforming GHP, for each GHP, both conforming and nonconforming, to which the employer or employee organization contributes.

Subpart F—Special Rules: Individuals Eligible or Entitled on the Basis of ESRD, Who Are Also Covered Under Group Health Plans

§411.160 Scope.

This subpart sets forth special rules that apply to individuals who are eligible for, or entitled to, Medicare on the basis of ESRD. (Section 406.13 of this chapter contains the rules for eligibility and entitlement based on ESRD.)

[60 FR 45367, Aug. 31, 1995]

§411.161 Prohibition against taking into account Medicare eligibility or entitlement or differentiating benefits.

(a) *Taking into account.* (1) *Basic rule.* A GHP may not take into account that an individual is eligible for or entitled to Medicare benefits on the basis of ESRD during the coordination period specified in §411.162(b) and (c). Examples of actions that constitute taking into account Medicare entitlement are listed in §411.108(a).

(2) *Applicability.* This prohibition applies for ESRD-based Medicare eligibility to the same extent as for ESRD-based Medicare entitlement. An individual who has ESRD but who has not filed an application for entitlement to Medicare on that basis is eligible for Medicare based on ESRD for purposes of paragraphs (b)(2) and (c)(2) through (c)(4) of §411.162 if the individual meets the other requirements of §406.13 of this chapter.

(3) *Relation to COBRA continuation coverage.* This rule does not prohibit the termination of GHP coverage under title X of COBRA when termination of that coverage is expressly permitted, upon entitlement to Medicare, under 26 U.S.C. 4980B(f)(2)(B)(iv); 29 U.S.C. 1162.(2)(D); or 42 U.S.C. 300bb-2.(2)(D).¹

¹COBRA requires that certain group health plans offer continuation of plan coverage for 18 to 36 months after the occurrence of certain “qualifying events,” including loss of employment or reduction of employment

(Situations in which Medicare is secondary to COBRA continuation coverage are set forth in §411.162(a)(3).)

(b) *Nondifferentiation.* (1) A GHP may not differentiate in the benefits it provides between individuals who have ESRD and others enrolled in the plan, on the basis of the existence of ESRD, or the need for renal dialysis, or in any other manner.

(2) GHP actions that constitute differentiation in plan benefits (and that may also constitute “taking into account” Medicare eligibility or entitlement) include, but are not limited to the following:

(i) Terminating coverage of individuals with ESRD, when there is no basis for such termination unrelated to ESRD (such as failure to pay plan premiums) that would result in termination for individuals who do not have ESRD.

(ii) Imposing on persons who have ESRD, but not on others enrolled in the plan, benefit limitations such as less comprehensive health plan coverage, reductions in benefits, exclusions of benefits, a higher deductible or coinsurance, a longer waiting period, a lower annual or lifetime benefit limit, or more restrictive preexisting illness limitations.

(iii) Charging individuals with ESRD higher premiums.

(iv) Paying providers and suppliers less for services furnished to individuals who have ESRD than for the same services furnished to those who do not have ESRD, such as paying 80 percent of the Medicare rate for renal dialysis on behalf of a plan enrollee who has ESRD and the usual, reasonable and customary charge for renal dialysis on

hours. Those are events that otherwise would result in loss of group health plan coverage unless the individual is given the opportunity to elect, and does so elect, to continue plan coverage at his or her own expense. With one exception, the COBRA amendments expressly permit termination of continuation coverage upon entitlement to Medicare. The exception is that the plan may not terminate continuation coverage of an individual (and his or her qualified dependents) if the individual retires on or before the date the employer substantially eliminates regular plan coverage by filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy (26 U.S.C. 4980B(g)(1)(D) and 29 U.S.C. 1167.(3)(C)).