HEALTH INSURANCE 101 FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Now that you have graduated from high school and been accepted to college, it's time to think of what you will need to make your college experience successful. You will need a place to stay; you will have to choose the right courses to satisfy your major; you will want a source of income to sustain you. You’re all set, right? Not exactly. What about your healthcare needs? Do you have student health insurance?

Student Health Insurance … “I Have Coverage Through My Folks, Don’t I?”

If you are a full-time student, your parents’ health insurance plan may cover you up to the age of 25, whether you live at home or are away at school. The age at which coverage ends varies by plan: check with your current plan to determine the age limit. There are also a few things to consider if you are living away from home:

- If your parents’ plan is an HMO, does the plan’s service area cover the region where you will be living? If not, you may only be covered for emergency care.
- If the plan is a PPO, how strong is the network of providers in your area?
- Does the plan cover emergency room visits without prior approval? What steps must you take in the event of hospitalization? Make sure you have the phone number of your parents’ health insurance plan to call for emergency treatment authorization.
- Which hospitals and urgent care facilities can you use?
- Are any outpatient or preventative services covered? If you have chosen a primary care physician or medical group at home, make sure you check with your plan to see if you should choose a new provider where your school is located.

NOTE: If the plan is an HMO that does not offer coverage in your new living location, you may be able to change health insurance plans due to “living outside of service area”. In this instance, the parent under whose plan you are covered should contact their employee benefits office right away to make the necessary changes.

Cobra Health Insurance

If you have recently reached the upper age limit of your parent’s health insurance plan, your parents’ employer may offer you alternative coverage. This is called COBRA. It allows you to continue your benefits for a period of 18 months after you lose coverage under your parent’s plan. You/your parents would pay the premium plus a small administration fee.

Individual Health Insurance

Your parents probably have a “group” health insurance plan, meaning they receive coverage through their job regardless of their health status. “Individual” health insurance means the plan is not offered through an employer, but is purchased directly by an individual. If you decide to purchase individual health insurance, the health insurance company will consider your past and present health (pre-existing conditions) to determine your premium. An individual plan can, with all of its stipulations, be less expensive than COBRA health insurance coverage. If you do have a pre-existing condition, continuing your present plan through COBRA may be a good option. If you are relatively healthy, obtaining a less expensive individual policy may be the ticket.

Student Health Insurance

If your campus offers a Student Health Insurance Plan, this may be another option. Although they may be less expensive than COBRA health insurance or individual coverage, make sure that the scope of coverage is adequate for your needs. Also, check what the plan covers during vacations and when you are away from school. Again, pre-existing condition clauses may apply. Feel free to contact Immaculata University’s Health Services Center for more information about our insurance plan or go directly to the website for First Risk Advisors at www.firststudent.com.

Last updated 9/27/2007