

**PLAN DOCUMENT
SUMMARY PLAN DESCRIPTION**

for the

**NORTHWEST MONTANA SCHOOLS' HEALTH CONSORTIUM
VISION PLAN**

This booklet describes the Plan Benefits
in effect as of July 1, 2024

The Plan has been established for the benefit of
eligible Employees and their Dependents of:

NORTHWEST MONTANA SCHOOLS' HEALTH CONSORTIUM

Claims Processed By:

ALLEGIANCE BENEFIT PLAN MANAGEMENT, INC.

2806 South Garfield Street
PO Box 3018
Missoula, MT 59806-3018

Missoula Area Phone Number: (406) 721-2222
Toll-Free Number: (800) 877-1122

COVER/SIGNATURE PAGE

Effective July 1, 2024, Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium (NMSHC) its self-funded Vision Care Plan for the benefit of eligible Employees and their eligible Dependents entitled, **NORTHWEST MONTANA SCHOOLS' HEALTH CONSORTIUM VISION PLAN** (the "Plan").

The purpose of this Plan is to provide reimbursement for Expenses Incurred for covered services, treatment or supplies as a result of Vision care services of the Employer's eligible Employees and their eligible Dependents. The Employer, in conjunction with any required contributions by its Employees, agrees to make payments to the Plan's Trust in order for payments to be made for Eligible Expenses as provided by this Plan.

The Employer has caused this instrument to be executed as of the day first mentioned above.

NORTHWEST MONTANA SCHOOLS' HEALTH CONSORTIUM

BY:

DocuSigned by:

5AE9BC7494D496

TITLE:

Executive Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
SCHEDULE OF VISION BENEFITS	2
VISION BENEFITS	3
PAYMENT OF BENEFITS	3
COVERED VISION CARE SERVICES	3
EXCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF BENEFITS	4
GENERAL PLAN EXCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS	5
COORDINATION OF BENEFITS	7
DEFINITIONS	7
ORDER OF BENEFIT DETERMINATION	8
Non-Dependent/Dependent	8
Dependent Child Covered Under More Than One Plan	8
Active Employee or Retired or Laid-Off Employee	9
COBRA or State Continuation Coverage	9
Longer or Shorter Length of Coverage	9
COORDINATION WITH MEDICAID	10
COORDINATION WITH TRICARE/CHAMPVA	10
PROCEDURES FOR CLAIMING BENEFITS	11
CLAIM DECISIONS ON CLAIMS AND ELIGIBILITY	11
Urgent Care Claims	12
Pre-Service Claims	12
Post-Service Claims	12
Concurrent Care Review	12
APPEALING AN UN-REIMBURSED CLAIM	12
FIRST LEVEL OF BENEFIT DETERMINATION REVIEW	13
SECOND LEVEL OF BENEFIT DETERMINATION REVIEW	13
Post-Service Claims	14
Concurrent Care Review	14
ELIGIBILITY PROVISIONS	15
EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY	15
WAITING PERIOD	15
DEPENDENT ELIGIBILITY	16
PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY FOR DEPENDENT COVERAGE	17
RETIREE ELIGIBILITY	17
EFFECTIVE DATE OF COVERAGE	18
PARTICIPANT COVERAGE	18
DEPENDENT COVERAGE	18
OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD	19
SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD	19
CHANGE IN STATUS	21
EFFECT OF SECTION 125 TAX REGULATIONS ON THIS PLAN	21
QUALIFIED MEDICAL CHILD SUPPORT ORDERS PROVISION	23
PURPOSE	23
DEFINITIONS	23
CRITERIA FOR A QUALIFIED MEDICAL CHILD SUPPORT ORDER	23
PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFICATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS	24

NATIONAL MEDICAL SUPPORT NOTICE	24
FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE	25
DEFINITIONS	25
EMPLOYERS SUBJECT TO FMLA	26
ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES	26
REASONS FOR TAKING LEAVE	26
ADVANCE NOTICE AND MEDICAL CERTIFICATION	26
PROTECTION OF JOB BENEFITS	26
UNLAWFUL ACTS BY EMPLOYERS	26
ENFORCEMENT	27
TERMINATION OF COVERAGE	28
PARTICIPANT TERMINATION	28
RETIREE TERMINATION	28
DEPENDENT TERMINATION	29
REINSTATEMENT OF COVERAGE	29
CONTINUATION COVERAGE AFTER TERMINATION	30
NOTIFICATION RESPONSIBILITIES	30
ELECTION OF COVERAGE	31
MONTHLY PREMIUM PAYMENTS	31
DISABILITY EXTENSION OF 18-MONTH PERIOD OF CONTINUATION COVERAGE	31
SECOND QUALIFYING EVENT EXTENSION OF 18-MONTH PERIOD OF CONTINUATION COVERAGE	32
MEDICARE ENROLLMENT EXTENSION OF 18-MONTH PERIOD OF CONTINUATION COVERAGE	32
WHEN COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE ENDS	32
OPTIONS OTHER THAN COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE	33
QUESTIONS	34
INFORM THE PLAN OF ADDRESS CHANGES	34
CONTINUATION COVERAGE FOR DOMESTIC PARTNERS	35
COVERAGE FOR A MILITARY RESERVIST	36
COVERAGE FOR A MONTANA NATIONAL GUARD MEMBER	37
FRAUD AND ABUSE	38
MISSTATEMENT OF AGE	38
MISREPRESENTATION OF ELIGIBILITY	38
MISUSE OF IDENTIFICATION CARD	38
REIMBURSEMENT TO PLAN	38
RECOVERY/REIMBURSEMENT/SUBROGATION	39
RIGHT TO RECOVER BENEFITS PAID IN ERROR	39
REIMBURSEMENT	39
SUBROGATION	39
PLAN ADMINISTRATION	41
PURPOSE	41
EFFECTIVE DATE	41
PLAN YEAR	41
PLAN YEAR	41
PLAN SPONSOR	41
PLAN SUPERVISOR	41
NAMED FIDUCIARY AND PLAN ADMINISTRATOR	41
PLAN INTERPRETATION	41

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PLAN	42
PLAN AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATION/TERMINATION	42
NOTICE OF REDUCTION OF BENEFITS	42
TERMINATION OF PLAN	42
PLAN DOCUMENTS/SUMMARY PLAN DESCRIPTIONS	42
GENERAL PROVISIONS	43
EXAMINATION	43
PAYMENT OF CLAIMS	43
LEGAL PROCEEDINGS	43
NO WAIVER OR ESTOPPEL	43
VERBAL STATEMENTS	43
FREE CHOICE OF VISION SERVICE PROVIDER	43
WORKERS' COMPENSATION NOT AFFECTED	44
CONFORMITY WITH LAW	44
MISCELLANEOUS	44
FACILITY OF PAYMENT	44
PROTECTION AGAINST CREDITORS	44
PLAN IS NOT A CONTRACT	44
GENERAL DEFINITIONS	45
PLAN SUMMARY	49

INTRODUCTION

Effective July 1, 2024, Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium (NMSHC), hereinafter referred to as the "Employer" restates the benefits, rights and privileges which will pertain to participating Employees, referred to as "Participants," and the eligible Dependents of such Participants, as defined, and which benefits are provided through a fund established by the Employer and referred to as the "Plan." This booklet describes the Plan in effect as of July 1, 2024.

Coverage provided under this Plan for Employees and their Dependents will be in accordance with the Eligibility, Effective Date, Qualified Medical Child Support Order, Termination, Family and Medical Leave Act and other applicable provisions as stated in this Plan.

Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium (the Plan Sponsor) has retained the services of an independent Plan Supervisor, experienced in claims processing, to handle health claims. The Plan Supervisor for the Plan is:

Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc.
P.O. Box 3018
Missoula, MT 59806-3018

Please read this booklet carefully before incurring any medical expenses. For specific questions regarding coverage or benefits, please refer to this Plan Document/Summary Plan Description which is available for review in the Personnel Office, at the office of the Plan Supervisor, or call or write to Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc. regarding any detailed questions concerning the Plan.

This Plan is not intended to, and cannot be used as workers compensation coverage for any employee or any covered dependent of an employee. Therefore, this plan generally excludes claims related to any activity engaged in for wage or profit including, but not limited to, farming, ranching, part-time and seasonal activities. See Plan Exclusions for specific information.

The information contained in this Plan Document/Summary Plan Description is only a general statement regarding FMLA, COBRA, USERRA, and QMCSO. It is not intended to be and should not be relied upon as complete legal information about those subjects. Covered Persons and Employers should consult their own legal counsel regarding these matters.

SCHEDULE OF VISION BENEFITS
FOR
ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS AND DEPENDENTS

THE BENEFIT PERIOD IS A TWELVE MONTH PERIOD
COMMENCING ON JULY 1 AND ENDING ON JUNE 30 OF EACH SUCCEEDING YEAR

Vision Benefits are payable at 100% up to Maximum Benefits outlined below.

Routine Eye Examination limited to 1 routine vision exam per Benefit Period up to the Maximum Benefit (includes dilation and contact lens exam and fitting)

Routine Eye Examination with Refraction	
Maximum Benefit up to	\$60
Routine Eye Examination without Refraction	
Maximum Benefit up to	\$49

Materials

Lenses Maximum Benefit	
Single Vision per Lens	\$32
Bifocal per Lens	\$41
Trifocal per Lens.	\$54
Lenticular per Lens.	\$77
Frames Maximum Benefit	\$85
Contact Lenses Maximum Benefit (Materials, Fittings and Evaluation only)	
Necessary per Lens	\$165
Necessary per Pair.	\$330
Elective per Pair	\$120
Disposable per Benefit Period	\$120

EITHER CONTACT LENSES OR A PAIR OF SPECTACLE LENSES, BUT NOT BOTH, ARE ELIGIBLE DURING ANY BENEFIT PERIOD.

VISION BENEFITS

PAYMENT OF BENEFITS

If a Covered Person, while covered for Vision Benefits, incurs charges for Covered Vision Care Services, benefits are payable under the Plan up to the Maximum Benefits stated in the Schedule of Vision Benefits.

COVERED VISION CARE SERVICES

Covered Vision Care Services are those Expenses Incurred in connection with the following Vision Care Services:

1. Routine eye examination with refraction includes:
 - A. Examination of the outer and inner parts of the eye
 - B. Glaucoma screening
 - C. Refraction
 - D. Binocular balance testing
 - E. Routine tests of color vision, peripheral vision and intraocular pressure
2. Routine eye examination without refraction includes:
 - A. Examination of the outer and inner parts of the eye
 - B. Glaucoma screening
 - C. Binocular balance testing
 - D. Routine tests of color vision, peripheral vision and intraocular pressure
 - E. Case history and recommendations
2. Eyewear Materials - Where the vision examination indicates that new lenses or frames or both are necessary for the proper visual health and welfare of the Covered Person, the following materials will be supplied:
 - A. Spectacle Lenses when prescribed by an ophthalmologist (or other Physician licensed to perform vision examinations and prescribe lenses) or optometrist up to the Maximum Benefit stated in the Schedule of Vision Benefits.
 - B. Frames up to the Maximum Benefit stated in the Schedule of Vision Benefits.
3. Necessary Contact Lenses - When deemed necessary by the Physician, the Expenses Incurred for the evaluation, fitting and materials for the dispensing of contact lenses will be provided, in lieu of frames and lenses, but in no event more frequently than one every Benefit Period up to the Maximum Benefit stated in the Schedule of Vision Benefits. The vision examination will be payable as stated in the Schedule of Vision Benefits. Contact Lenses are necessary for any of the following conditions:
 - A. Following cataract surgery;
 - B. To correct extreme visual acuity problems that cannot be corrected with spectacle lenses;
 - C. Certain conditions of Anisometropia; or
 - D. Keratoconus.

4. Elective Contact Lenses - When a Covered Person chooses contact lenses for reasons other than those conditions for Necessary Contact Lenses, the Expenses Incurred for the evaluation, fitting and materials for contact lenses for the dispensing of contact lenses will be provided, in lieu of frames and lenses, but in no event more frequently than once per Benefit Period up to the Maximum Benefit stated in the Schedule of Vision Benefits. The vision examination will be payable as stated in the Schedule of Vision Benefits.

EXCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF BENEFITS

The General Plan Exclusions and Limitations of the Plan apply to Vision Benefits in addition to the following Vision Benefit Exclusions:

1. Services or supplies for which the Covered Person is entitled to benefits under any other section of the Plan or as provided under any other section of the Plan.
2. Sunglasses (tinted lenses with a tint other than Tints No. 1 or No. 2 are considered to be sunglasses for the purposes of this exclusion).
3. Extra charges for Cosmetic materials, photosensitive or lens coatings.
4. Drugs or any other medication not administered for the purpose of a vision examination.
5. Medical or surgical treatment of the eye.
6. Special or unusual procedures such as, but not limited to, orthoptics, vision training, subnormal vision aids, aniseikonia lenses and tonography.
7. Two pair of eyeglasses in lieu of bifocals.
8. Plano (non-prescription lenses).
9. Services rendered or ordered while not covered for Vision Benefits.
10. Services or supplies not prescribed as necessary by a licensed Physician, optometrist or optician.
11. Replacement of lenses or frames which are lost or broken except at the normal intervals indicated.

GENERAL PLAN EXCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The following general exclusions and limitations apply to all Expenses Incurred under this Plan:

1. Charges for any services or supplies to the extent that benefits are otherwise provided under this Plan, or under any other plan of group benefits that the Participant's Employer contributes to or sponsors.
2. Charges by the Covered Person for all services and supplies resulting from any vision condition which occurs in the course of employment for wage or profit, or in the course of any volunteer work when the organization, for whom the Covered Person is volunteering, has elected or is required by law to obtain coverage for such volunteer work under state or federal workers' compensation laws or other legislation, including Employees' compensation or liability laws of the United States (collectively called "Workers' Compensation"). This exclusion applies to all such services and supplies resulting from a work-related vision injury even though:
 - A. Coverage for the Covered Person under Workers' Compensation provides benefits for only a portion of the services Incurred;
 - B. The Covered Person's employer/volunteer organization has failed to obtain such coverage required by law;
 - C. The Covered Person waived his/her rights to such coverage or benefits;
 - D. The Covered Person fails to file a claim within the filing period allowed by law for such benefits;
 - E. The Covered Person fails to comply with any other provision of the law to obtain such coverage or benefits; or
 - F. The Covered Person is permitted to elect not to be covered by Workers' Compensation but failed to properly make such election effective.
 - G. The Covered Person is permitted to elect not to be covered by Workers' Compensation and has affirmatively made that election.

This exclusion will not apply to household and domestic employment, employment not in the usual course of the trade, business, profession or occupation of the Covered Person or Employee, or employment of a Dependent member of an Employee's family for whom an exemption may be claimed by the Employee under the Internal Revenue Code, or in cases in which it is legally impossible to obtain Workers' Compensation coverage for a specific Illness or Injury.

3. Charges for which the Covered Person is not, in the absence of this coverage, legally obligated to pay, or for which a charge would not ordinarily be made in the absence of this coverage.
4. Charges incurred for services rendered or started, or supplies furnished prior to the effective date of coverage under the Plan, or after coverage is terminated under the Plan.
5. Charges for any services, supplies or appliances which are not specifically listed as a benefit of this Plan.
6. Charges which are caused by or arising out of war or act of war, (whether declared or undeclared), civil unrest, armed invasion or aggression, or caused during service in the armed forces of any country.

General Plan Exclusions and Limitations

7. Broken or missed appointments.
8. Travel Expenses Incurred by any person for any reason.
9. To the extent that the Covered Person could have obtained payment, in whole or in part, if he or she had applied for coverage or obtained treatment under any federal, state or other governmental program or in a treatment facility operated by a government agency, except where required by law or for coverage provided by Medicaid.
10. Expenses Incurred by persons other than the person receiving treatment.
11. Charges in connection with services and supplies which are in excess of the Eligible Expense.
12. Charges for services rendered by a Physician or Licensed Health Care Provider who is a Close Relative of the Covered Person, or resides in the same household of the Covered Person and who does not regularly charge the Covered Person for services.
13. Charges for professional services on an Outpatient basis in connection with disorders of any type or cause, that can be credited towards earning a degree or furtherance of the education or training of a Covered Person regardless of the diagnosis.
14. Charges for services, treatment or supplies not considered legal in the United States.
15. Charges for preparation of reports or itemized bills in connection with Eligible Expenses, unless specifically requested and approved by the Plan.
16. Charges for the following treatments, services or supplies:
 - A. Charges related to or connected with treatments, services or supplies that are excluded under this Plan.
 - B. Charges that are the result of any medical complication resulting from a treatment, service or supply which is, or was at the time the charge was incurred, excluded from coverage under this Plan.
17. Charges for treatment, services or supplies not actually rendered to or received and used by the Covered Person.

COORDINATION OF BENEFITS

The Coordination of Benefits provision prevents the payment of benefits which exceed the Allowable Expense. It applies when the Participant or Dependent who is covered by this Plan is or may also be covered by any other plan(s). This Plan will always pay either its benefits in full or a reduced amount which, when added to the benefits payable by the other plan(s), will not exceed 100% of the Allowable Expense. Only the amount paid by this Plan will be charged against the Plan maximums.

The Coordination of Benefits provision applies whether or not a claim is filed under the other plan or plans. If needed, authorization is hereby given this Plan to obtain information as to benefits or services available from the other plan or plans, or to recover overpayments.

All benefits contained in the Plan Document/Summary Plan Description are subject to this provision.

DEFINITIONS

“Allowable Expense” as used herein means:

1. If the claim as applied to the primary plan is subject to a contracted or negotiated rate, Allowable Expense will be equal to that contracted or negotiated amount.
2. If the claim as applied to the primary plan is not subject to a contracted or negotiated rate, but the claim as applied to the secondary plan is subject to a contracted or negotiated rate, the Allowable Expense will be equal to that contracted or negotiated amount of the secondary plan.
3. If the claim as applied to the primary plan and the secondary plan is not subject to a contracted or negotiated rate, then the Allowable Expense will be equal to the secondary plan’s chosen limits for non-contracted providers.

“Plan” as used herein means any plan providing benefits or services for or by reason of medical or vision treatment, and such benefits or services are provided by:

1. Group insurance or any other arrangement for coverage for Covered Persons in a group whether on an insured or uninsured basis including, but not limited to:
 - A. Hospital indemnity benefits; and
 - B. Hospital reimbursement-type plans which permit the Covered Person to elect indemnity at the time of claims; or
2. Hospital or medical service organizations on a group basis, group practice and other group pre-payment plans; or
3. Hospital or medical service organizations on an individual basis having a provision similar in effect to this provision; or
4. A licensed Health Maintenance Organization (H.M.O.); or
5. Any coverage for students which is sponsored by, or provided through a school or other educational institution; or
6. Any coverage under a Governmental program, and any coverage required or provided by any statute.

“Plan” will be construed separately with respect to each policy, contract, or other arrangement for benefits or services, and separately with respect to that portion of any such policy, contract, or other arrangement which reserves the right to take the benefits or services of other plans into consideration in determining its benefits and that portion which does not.

ORDER OF BENEFIT DETERMINATION

1. **Non-Dependent/Dependent:**

The plan that covers the person as other than a dependent, (e.g., as an employee, member, subscriber, retiree) is primary and the plan that covers the person as a dependent is secondary.

2. **Dependent Child Covered Under More Than One Plan:**

Unless there is a court decree stating otherwise, plans covering a dependent child shall determine the order of benefits as follows:

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

- 1) The plan of the parent whose birthday falls earlier in the calendar year is the primary plan; or
- 2) 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 or separated or are not living together, whether or not they have ever been married:

- 1) If a court decree 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. If the parent with responsibility has no health care coverage for the dependent child's health care expenses, but that parent's spouse does, that parent's spouse's plan is the primary plan. This item shall not apply with respect to any plan year during which benefits are paid or provided before the entity has actual knowledge of the court decree provision;
- 2) If a court decree states that both parents are responsible for the dependent child's health care expenses or health care coverage, the provisions of subparagraph A of this paragraph shall determine the order of benefit;
- 3) If a court decree 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 subparagraph A of this paragraph shall determine the order of benefit;
- 4) If there is no court decree allocating responsibility for the child's health care expenses or health care coverage, the order of benefits for the child are as follows:
 - a) The plan covering the custodial parent;
 - b) The plan covering the custodial parent's spouse;
 - c) The plan covering the non-custodial parent; and then
 - d) The plan covering the non-custodial parent's spouse.

C. For a dependent child covered under more than one plan of individuals who are not the parents of the child, the order of benefits shall be determined, as applicable, under subparagraph a or b of this paragraph as if those individuals were parents of the child.

D. For a dependent child who has coverage under either or both parents' plans and also has his or her own coverage as a dependent under a spouse's plan, the rule in paragraph 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 parent's plans, the order of benefits shall be determined by applying the birthday rule in subparagraph A to the dependent child's parent(s) and the dependent's spouse.

3. Active Employee or Retired or Laid-Off Employee

- A. The plan that covers a person as an active employee that is an employee who is neither laid-off nor retired or as a dependent of an active employee is the primary plan. The plan covering that same person as a retired or laid-off employee or as a dependent of a retired or laid-off employee is the secondary plan.
- B. 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 is ignored.
- C. This rule does not apply if the rule in paragraph 1 can determine the order of benefits.

4. COBRA or State Continuation Coverage:

- A. If a person whose coverage is provided pursuant to COBRA or under a right of continuation pursuant to 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 plan covering the same person pursuant to COBRA or under a right of continuation pursuant to state or other federal law is the secondary plan.
- B. If the other plan does not have this rule, and if, as a result, the plans do not agree on the order of benefits, this rule is ignored.
- C. This rule does not apply if the rule in paragraph 1 can determine the order of benefits.

5. Longer or Shorter Length of Coverage

- A. If the preceding rules do not determine the order of benefits, the plan that covered the person for the longer period of time is the primary plan and the plan that covered the person for the shorter period of time is the secondary plan.
- B. To determine the length of time a person has been covered under a plan, two successive plans shall be treated as one if the covered person was eligible under the second plan within twenty-four (24) hours after coverage under the first plan ended.
- C. The start of a new plan does not include:
 - 1) A change in the amount or scope of a plan's benefits;
 - 2) A change in the entity that pays, provides or administers the plan's benefits; or
 - 3) A change from one type of plan to another, such as, from a single employer plan to a multiple employer plan.
- D. The person's length of time covered under a plan is measured from the person's first date of coverage under that plan. If that date is not readily available for a group plan, the date the person first became a member of the group shall be used as the date from which to determine the length of time the person's coverage under the present plan has been in force.

- 6. If none of the preceding rules determines the order of benefits, the Allowable Expense shall be shared equally between the plans.

COORDINATION WITH MEDICAID

If a Covered Person is also entitled to and covered by Medicaid, this Plan will always be primary and Medicaid will always be secondary coverage.

COORDINATION WITH TRICARE/CHAMPVA

If a Covered Person is also entitled to and covered under TRICARE/CHAMPVA, this Plan will always be primary and TRICARE/CHAMPVA will always be secondary coverage. TRICARE coverage will include programs established under its authority, known as TRICARE Standard, TRICARE Extra and TRICARE Prime.

If the Covered Person is eligible for Medicare and entitled to veterans benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), this Plan will always be primary and the VA will always be secondary for non-service connected medical claims. For these claims, this Plan will make payment to the VA as though this Plan was making payment secondary to Medicare.

PROCEDURES FOR CLAIMING BENEFITS

Claims must be submitted to the Plan within twelve (12) months after the date services or treatment are received or completed. Non-electronic claims may be submitted on any approved claim, available from the provider. The claim must be completed in full with all the requested information. A complete claim must include the following information:

- Date of service;
- Name of the Participant;
- Name and date of birth of the patient receiving the treatment or service and his/her relationship to the Participant;
- Diagnosis [code] of the condition being treated;
- Treatment or service [code] performed;
- Amount charged by the provider for the treatment or service; and
- Sufficient documentation, in the sole determination of the Plan Administrator, to support the treatment or service being provided and sufficient to enable the Plan Supervisor to adjudicate the claim pursuant to the terms and conditions of the Plan.

When completed, the claim must be sent to the Plan Supervisor, Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc., at P.O. Box 3018, Missoula, Montana 59806-3018, (406) 721-2222 or (800) 877-1122 or through any electronic claims submission system or clearinghouse to which Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc. has access.

A claim will not, under any circumstances, be considered for payment of benefits if initially submitted to the Plan more than twelve (12) months from the date that services were incurred.

Upon termination of the Plan, final claims must be received within three (3) months of the date of termination, unless otherwise established by the Plan Administrator.

CLAIMS WILL NOT BE DEEMED SUBMITTED UNTIL RECEIVED BY THE PLAN SUPERVISOR.

The Plan will have the right, in its sole discretion and at its own expense, to require a claimant to undergo a examination, when and as often as may be reasonable, and to require the claimant to submit, or cause to be submitted, any and all vision and other relevant records it deems necessary to properly adjudicate the claim.

CLAIM DECISIONS ON CLAIMS AND ELIGIBILITY

Claims will be considered for payment according to the Plan's terms and conditions, industry-standard claims processing guidelines and administrative practices not inconsistent with the terms of the Plan. The Plan may, when appropriate or when required by law, consult with relevant health care professionals and access professional industry resources in making decisions about claims that involve specialized knowledge or judgment. Initial eligibility and claims decisions will be made within the time periods stated below. For purposes of this section, "Covered Person" will include the claimant and the claimant's Authorized Representative; however, "Covered Person" does not include a health care provider or other assignee, and said health care provider or assignee does not have an independent right to appeal an Adverse Benefit Determination simply by virtue of the assignment of benefits.

"Authorized Representative" means a representative authorized by the claimant to act on their behalf in pursuing a benefit claim or appeal of an Adverse Benefit Determination. The claimant must authorize the representative in writing, and this written authorization must be provided to the Plan. The Plan will recognize this Authorized Representative when the Plan receives the written authorization.

INFORMATION REGARDING URGENT CARE CLAIMS AND PRE-SERVICE CLAIMS IS PROVIDED TO YOU UNDER THE DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICABLE LAW; HOWEVER, BECAUSE THIS PLAN DOES NOT REQUIRE PREAUTHORIZATION FOR ANY TREATMENT, THESE URGENT CARE AND PRE-SERVICE TIMING REQUIREMENTS DO NOT APPLY. THE PLAN DOES NOT MAKE TREATMENT DECISIONS. ANY DECISION TO RECEIVE TREATMENT MUST BE MADE BETWEEN THE PATIENT AND HIS OR HER HEALTHCARE PROVIDER; HOWEVER, THE PLAN WILL ONLY PAY BENEFITS ACCORDING TO THE TERMS, CONDITIONS, LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS OF THIS PLAN.

1. **Urgent Care Claims** - An Urgent Care Claim is any claim for vision care or treatment with respect to which:
 - A. In the judgement of a prudent layperson possessing an average knowledge of health and medicine could seriously jeopardize the life or health of the claimant or the ability of the claimant to regain maximum function; or
 - B. In the opinion of a Physician with knowledge of the claimant's vision condition, would subject the claimant to severe pain that cannot be adequately managed without the care or treatment that is the subject of the claim.

There are no Urgent Care requirements under this Plan.

2. **Pre-Service Claims** - Pre-Service Claims must be submitted to the Plan before the Covered Person receives vision treatment or service. A Pre-Service Claim is any claim for a vision benefit which the Plan terms condition the Covered Person's receipt of the benefit, in whole or in part, on approval of the benefit before obtaining treatment. Pre-Service Claims are claims decisions that the Plan requires pre-authorization before a Covered Person obtains vision care.

There are no Pre-Service requirements under this Plan.

3. **Post-Service Claims** - A Post-Service Claim is any claim for a vision benefit under the Plan with respect to which the terms of the Plan do not condition the Covered Person's receipt of the benefit, or any part thereof, on approval of the benefit prior to obtaining vision care, and for which vision treatment has been obtained prior to submission of the claim(s).

In most cases, initial claims decisions on Post-Service Claims will be made within thirty (30) days of the Plan's receipt of the claim. The Plan will provide timely notice of the initial determination once sufficient information is received to make an initial determination, but no later than thirty (30) days after receiving the claim.

4. **Concurrent Care Review** - For patients who face early termination or reduction of benefits for a course of treatment previously certified by the Plan, a decision by the Plan to reduce or terminate benefits for ongoing care is considered an Adverse Benefit Determination. (Note: Exhaustion of the Plan's benefit maximums is not an Adverse Benefit Determination.) The Plan will notify the Covered Person sufficiently in advance to allow an appeal for uninterrupted continuing care before the benefit is reduced or terminated. Any request to extend an Urgent Care course of treatment beyond the initially prescribed period of time must be decided within twenty-four (24) hours of the Plan's receipt of the request. The appeal for ongoing care or treatment must be made to the Plan at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the expiration of the initially-prescribed period.

APPEALING AN UN-REIMBURSED CLAIM

If a claim is denied in whole or in part, the Covered Person will receive written notification of the Adverse Benefit Determination. A claim Explanation of Benefits (EOB) will be provided by the Plan showing:

1. The reason the claim was denied;

2. Reference(s) to the specific plan provision(s) or rule(s) upon which the decision was based which resulted in the Adverse Benefit Determination;
3. Any additional information needed to perfect the claim and why such information is needed; and
4. An explanation of the Covered Person's right to appeal the Adverse Benefit Determination for a full and fair review and the right to bring a civil action under Section 502(a) of ERISA following an Adverse Benefit Determination on appeal.

If a Covered Person does not understand the reason for any Adverse Benefit Determination, he or she should contact the Plan Supervisor at the address or telephone number shown on the EOB form.

The Covered Person must appeal the Adverse Benefit Determination before the Covered Person may exercise his or her right to bring a civil action under Section 502(a) of ERISA. This Plan provides two (2) levels of benefit determination review and the Covered Person must exercise both levels of review before bringing a civil action.

To initiate the first level of benefit review, the Covered Person must submit in writing an appeal or a request for review of the Adverse Benefit Determination to the Plan within one hundred eighty (180) days after the Adverse Benefit Determination. The Covered Person should include any additional information supporting the appeal or the information required by the Plan which was not initially provided and forward it to the Plan Supervisor within the 180-day time period. Failure to appeal the Adverse Benefit Determination within the 180-day time period will render the determination final. Any appeal received after the 180-day time period has expired will receive no further consideration.

Appeals or requests for review of Adverse Benefit Determinations must be submitted to the Plan in writing to P.O. Box 1269, Missoula, MT 59806-1269. Supporting materials may be submitted via mail, electronic claims submission process, facsimile (fax) or electronic mail (e-mail).

FIRST LEVEL OF BENEFIT DETERMINATION REVIEW

The first level of benefit determination review is done by the Plan Supervisor. The Plan Supervisor will research the information initially received and determine if the initial determination was appropriate based on the terms and conditions of the Plan and other relevant information. Notice of the decision on the first level of review will be sent to the Covered Person within thirty (30) days following the date the Plan Supervisor receives the request for reconsideration.

If, based on the Plan Supervisor's review, the initial Adverse Benefit Determination remains the same and the Covered Person does not agree with that benefit determination, the Covered Person must initiate the second level of benefit review. The Covered Person must request the second review in writing and send it to the Plan Supervisor, not later than sixty (60) days after receipt of the Plan Supervisor's decision from the first level of review. Failure to initiate the second level of benefit review within the 60-day time period will render the determination final.

SECOND LEVEL OF BENEFIT DETERMINATION REVIEW

The second level review of the claim in question along with the additional information submitted by the Covered Person will be reviewed by the Appeals Committee of the Plan Supervisor (Appeals Committee). The Appeals Committee will conduct a full and fair review of the claim. The Appeals Committee will be neither the original decisionmaker nor the decisionmaker's subordinate. The Appeals Committee cannot give deference to the initial benefit determination. The Appeals Committee may, when appropriate or if required by law, consult with relevant health care professionals in making decisions about appeals that involve specialized medical judgment. Where the appeal involves issues of Medical Necessity or Experimental or Investigational treatment, the Appeals Committee will consult with a health care professional with appropriate training who was neither the medical professional consulted in the initial determination or his or her subordinate.

Procedures For Claiming Benefits

After a full and fair review of the Covered Person's appeal, the Appeals Committee will provide a written or electronic notice of the final benefit determination, which contains the same information as notices for the initial determination, within the following time periods:

1. **Post-Service Claims** - With regard to an appeal on a Post-Service Claim, the Plan will notify the Covered Person of its appeal decision within a reasonable time, but no later than thirty (30) days from the date the appeal is received by the Plan at each level of review.
2. **Concurrent Care Review** - Decisions on appeals will be made within seventy-two (72) hours if the claim is found to be an Urgent Care Claim, or within fifteen (15) days in all other circumstances.

All claim payments are based upon the terms contained in the Plan Document/Summary Plan Description, on file with the Plan Administrator and the Plan Supervisor. The Covered Person may request, free of charge, more detailed information, names of any vision professionals consulted and copies of relevant documents, as defined in and required by law, which were used by the Plan to adjudicate the claim.

ELIGIBILITY PROVISIONS

If both spouses or domestic partners are employed by the Employer, and both are eligible for Dependent Coverage, either spouse or domestic partner, but not both, may elect Dependent Coverage for their eligible Dependents. No one can be covered under this Plan as both an Employee and a Dependent. No one can be covered under this Plan as a Dependent by more than one Participant.

EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY

An Employee becomes eligible under this Plan for each classification of employees as follows:

1. Class I - Is classified as a full-time Employee and is employed by the Employer as stated below:
 - A. Fair-Mont Egan School District No. 3 - Employed on a continuing and regular basis for at least eighteen (18) hours per week.
 - B. All other Schools in the Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium Plan - Employed on a continuing and regular basis for at least twenty (20) hours per week.
2. Class II - Is employed by the Employer as a variable hour Employee and completes a Measurement Period of twelve (12) consecutive months, during which the variable hour Employee averages thirty (30) hours per week of actual work and/or paid leave, FMLA leave or jury duty whether paid or not, for twelve (12) consecutive months.

"Measurement Period" is the period of time adopted by the Plan for variable hour Employees during which such Employees' work hours and applicable leave are measured to determine whether such Employees are eligible for coverage.

An Employee is not eligible while on active military duty if that duty exceeds a period of thirty-one (31) consecutive days.

WAITING PERIOD

With respect to a person covered by a previous plan or previous group health insurance of the Employer on the effective date of this Plan, the effective date of coverage under this Plan will be the effective date of the Plan.

With respect to an eligible Employee, coverage under the Plan will not start until the Employee completes a Waiting Period. The Waiting Period commences with the date the Employee meets the eligibility requirements stated above (Enrollment Date) and ends for each classification of Employees as follows:

1. Class I - For full-time Employees, the last day of the month the Enrollment Date.
2. Class II - For variable hour Employees, two (2) months from the end of the Measurement Period defined in "Employee Eligibility" subsection above. If elected, coverage under this section shall continue for a period of not more than twelve (12) months provided the Participant remains employed by the Employer regardless of the number of hours worked during that time period. This period of time is the Coverage Period.

For a Class I Employee only, the effective date of coverage for an ineligible Employee who has an employment status change which makes him/her eligible for coverage will be the Enrollment Date.

DEPENDENT ELIGIBILITY

1. The Participant's legal spouse according to the marriage laws of the state where the marriage was first solemnized or established.

An eligible Dependent does not include a spouse who is legally separated or divorced from the Participant and has a court order or decree stating such from a court of competent jurisdiction.

2. The Participant's domestic partner of the same or opposite sex. Domestic Partners are two individuals, who each meet all of the following criteria:

- A. Shares a permanent residence, and have resided with one another continuously for at least twelve (12) consecutive months before filing an application for benefits and are expected to continue to reside with one another indefinitely; and
- B. Has not signed a declaration or affidavit of domestic partnership with any other person and have not had another domestic partner within the twelve (12) months prior to filing an application for benefits; and
- C. Does not have any other domestic partner or spouse of the same or opposite sex; and
- D. Is not currently married to anyone or legally separated from anyone else; and
- E. Is not a blood relative any closer that would prohibit marriage between us in Montana; and
- F. Was mentally competent to consent to contract when the partnership began; and
- G. Is not acting under fraud or duress in accepting benefits; and
- H. Is at least eighteen (18) years of age.
- I. One partner qualifies as the tax dependent of the other under §(152) of the internal revenue code.
- J. Is financially interdependent in at least three (3) of the following ways:
 - 1) Having a joint mortgage, joint property tax identification, or joint tenancy on a residential lease.
 - 2) Holding one or more credit or bank accounts jointly, such as a checking account in both names.
 - 3) Having joint ownership of significant property, such as real estate or a vehicle.
 - 4) Assuming joint liabilities.
 - 5) Naming the partner as beneficiary on the employee's life insurance, under the employee's will, or employee's retirement annuities and being named by the partner as beneficiary on the partner's life insurance, under the partner's will, or partner's retirement annuities.
 - 6) Each agreeing in writing to assume the financial responsibility for the welfare of the other; such as mutually granted powers of attorney.

3. The Participant's or domestic partner's Dependent child who meets all of the following "Required Eligibility Conditions":
 - A. Is a natural child; step-child; legally adopted child; a child who has been Placed for Adoption with the Participant or the Participant's domestic partner and for whom as part of such placement the Participant or the Participant's domestic partner has a legal obligation for the partial or full support of such child, including providing coverage under the Plan pursuant to a written agreement; a person for whom the Participant or the Participant's domestic partner has been appointed the legal guardian by a court of competent jurisdiction prior to the person attaining nineteen (19) years of age; and
 - B. Is less than twenty-six (26) years of age. This requirement is waived if the Participant's child or the Participant's domestic partner's child is unmarried and mentally handicapped/challenged or physically handicapped/challenged, provided that the child is incapable of self-supporting employment and is chiefly dependent upon the Participant or the Participant's domestic partner for support and maintenance. Proof of incapacity must be furnished to the Plan Administrator upon request, and additional proof may be required from time to time.

An eligible Dependent does not include a spouse or domestic partner of the Dependent child or a child of the Dependent child.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY FOR DEPENDENT COVERAGE

Each Employee will become eligible for Dependent Coverage on the latest of:

1. The date the Employee becomes eligible for Participant coverage; or
2. The date on which the Employee first acquires a Dependent.

RETIREE ELIGIBILITY

Retirees of Northwest Montana Schools' Consortium participating schools are also eligible under this Plan if the Retiree satisfies one of the following conditions:

1. The retired person was an eligible covered Employee under this Plan on the day immediately before the date of retirement and retired pursuant to the terms of the Montana Teachers Retirement or Public Employees Retirement laws and is eligible for coverage pursuant to the terms of 2-18-704, MCA, as amended from time to time; or
2. The retired person was an eligible covered Employee under this Plan on the day immediately before the date of retirement, was not eligible for retirement under the terms of 2-18-704, MCA, but was eligible for retirement under the terms and conditions of the employment policies and practices of Northwest Montana Schools' Consortium participating schools (the person must have been employed by Northwest Montana Schools' Consortium participating school on the day immediately before retirement).

A Dependent spouse or domestic partner of the retired person who is covered under this Plan and who meets the eligibility requirements is also eligible under this Plan. A Dependent child of the retired person is not eligible.

If coverage terminates for a Retiree or a Dependent spouse or domestic partner of a Retiree for any reason, eligibility is forever barred.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF COVERAGE

All coverage under the Plan will commence at 12:01 A.M. in the time zone in which the Covered Person permanently resides, on the date such coverage becomes effective.

PARTICIPANT COVERAGE

Participant coverage under the Plan will become effective on the first day immediately following the date the Employee satisfies the applicable eligibility requirements and Waiting Period, provided that application for such coverage is made on the Plan's enrollment form within thirty (30) days immediately following the last day of the Waiting Period imposed by this Plan.

An eligible Employee who declines Participant coverage under the Plan during the Initial Enrollment Period will be able to become covered later in only during Open Enrollment Period, Special Enrollment Period or as a result of Section 125 Change in Status.

A variable hour Employee will remain covered for a period of time not to exceed twelve (12) months from the effective date of coverage (the Coverage Period) regardless of the number of hours worked and applicable leave, as long as the individual remains employed by the Employer. At the end of the Coverage Period, if the individual remains employed as a variable hour Employee and averages at least thirty (30) hours per week during the Coverage Period, the individual will remain covered for a period of time not to exceed an additional twelve (12) months.

"Coverage Period" is the maximum period of time variable hour Employees can be covered under the Plan as active Employees after completion of a Measurement Period as defined in the "Eligibility Provisions under the "Employee Eligibility" subsection.

DEPENDENT COVERAGE

Each Participant who requests Dependent Coverage on the Plan's enrollment form will become covered for Dependent Coverage as follows:

1. On the Participant's effective date of coverage, if application for Dependent Coverage is made on the same enrollment platform used by the Participant to enroll for coverage. This subsection applies only to Dependents who are eligible on the Participant's effective date of coverage.
2. In the event a Dependent is acquired after the Participant's effective date of coverage as a result of a legal guardianship or in the event that a Participant is required to provide coverage as a result of a valid court order, or if the Dependent is acquired as a result of operation of law, Dependent Coverage will begin on the first day of the month following the Plan's receipt of an enrollment form and copy of said court order, if applicable.
3. In the event a Dependent is acquired after the Participant's effective date of coverage as a result of a Domestic Partnership Declaration, Dependent coverage for the eligible domestic partner will begin on the date Plan receives a signed Declaration of Domestic Partnership.

OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD

The Open Enrollment Period will generally occur during May of each year, as determined by the Plan Administrator, during which an Employee and the Employee's eligible Dependents, who are not covered under this Plan, may request Participant or Dependent coverage. Coverage must be requested on the Plan's enrollment platform.

Coverage requested during any Open Enrollment Period will begin on July 1 immediately following the Open Enrollment Period.

SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD

In addition to other enrollment times allowed by this Plan, certain persons may enroll during the Special Enrollment Periods described below.

For birth, adoption or Placement for Adoption, coverage will become effective on the date of the event if application for such coverage is made on the Plan's enrollment platform within sixty (60) days of the event.

For birth, adoption or Placement for Adoption, coverage will become effective on the first day of the month following the date of event if application for such coverage is made on the Plan's enrollment platform within sixty (60) days of the event.

1. An eligible Employee who is not enrolled and eligible Dependents, including step children, who are acquired under the following specific events may enroll and become covered:
 - A. Marriage to the Employee; or
 - B. Birth of the Employee's child; or
 - C. Adoption of a child by the Employee, provided the child is under the age of 19; or
 - D. Placement for Adoption with the Employee, provided such Employee has a legal obligation for the partial or full support of such child, including providing coverage under the Plan pursuant to a written agreement and the child is under the age of 19.
2. A Participant may enroll eligible Dependents, including step children, who are acquired under the following specific events:
 - A. Marriage to the Participant; or
 - B. Birth of the Participant's child; or
 - C. Adoption of a child by the Participant, provided the child is under the age of 19; or
 - D. Placement for Adoption with the Employee, provided such Employee has a legal obligation for the partial or full support of such child, including providing coverage under the Plan pursuant to a written agreement and the child is under the age of 19.
3. The spouse or domestic partner of a Participant (Covered Employee), or the spouse or domestic partner of a Retiree who is covered at the time of the Special Enrollment event, may enroll and will become covered under the following specific events:
 - A. Marriage to the Participant or Retiree; or
 - B. Birth of the Participant's child; or
 - C. Adoption of a child by the Participant, provided the child is under the age of 19; or

- D. Placement for Adoption with the Employee, provided such Employee has a legal obligation for the partial or full support of such child, including providing coverage under the Plan pursuant to a written agreement and the child is under the age of 19.
4. The following individuals may enroll and become covered when coverage under another health care plan or health insurance is terminated due to loss of eligibility or if employer contributions to the other coverage have been terminated (Loss of Coverage), subject to the following:
- A. If the eligible Employee loses coverage, the eligible Employee who lost coverage and any eligible Dependents of the eligible Employee may enroll and become covered.
 - B. If an eligible Dependent loses coverage, the eligible Dependent who lost coverage and the eligible Employee may enroll and become covered.

Further, Loss of Coverage means only one of the following:

- A. COBRA Continuation Coverage under another plan and the maximum period of COBRA Continuation Coverage under that other plan has been exhausted; or
- B. Group or insurance health coverage that has been terminated as a result of termination of employer contributions* towards that other coverage; or
- C. Group or insurance health coverage (includes other coverage that is Medicare) that has been terminated only as a result of a loss of eligibility for coverage for any of the following:
 - 1) Legal separation or divorce of the eligible Employee;
 - 2) Cessation of Dependent status;
 - 3) Death of the eligible Employee;
 - 4) Termination of employment of the eligible Dependent;
 - 5) Reduction in the number of hours of employment of the eligible Dependent;
 - 6) Termination of the eligible Dependent's employer's plan;
 - 7) Any loss of eligibility after a period that is measured by reference to any of the foregoing; or
 - 8) Any loss of eligibility for individual or group coverage because the eligible Employee or Dependent no longer resides, lives or works in the service area of the Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) or other such plan.

*Employer contributions include contributions by any current or former employer that was contributing to the other non-COBRA coverage.

A loss of eligibility for coverage does not occur if coverage was terminated due to a failure of the Employee or Dependent to pay premiums on a timely basis or coverage was terminated for cause.

5. Individuals may enroll and become covered when coverage under Medicaid or any state children's insurance program recognized under the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 is terminated due to loss of eligibility, subject to the following:
 - A. A request for enrollment must be made either verbally or in writing within sixty (60) days after this special enrollment event, and written application for such coverage must be made within ninety (90) days after such event.
 - B. If the eligible Employee loses coverage, the eligible Employee who lost coverage and any eligible Dependents of the eligible Employee may enroll and become covered.
 - C. If an eligible Dependent loses coverage, the eligible Dependent who lost coverage and the eligible Employee may enroll and become covered.
6. Individuals who are eligible for coverage under this Plan may enroll and become covered on the date they become entitled to a Premium Assistance Subsidy authorized under the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009. The date of entitlement shall be the date stated in the Premium Assistance Authorization entitlement notice issued by the applicable state agency (CHIP or Medicaid). A request for enrollment, either verbal or in writing, must be made within sixty (60) days after this special enrollment event, and written application for such coverage must be made in writing within ninety (90) days after such event.

CHANGE IN STATUS

If a Covered Dependent under this Plan becomes an eligible Employee of the Employer, he/she may continue his/her coverage as a Dependent or elect to be covered as a Participant.

If an eligible Employee who is covered as a Participant of this Plan ceases to be an Employee of the Employer, but is eligible to be covered as a Dependent under another Employee/Participant, he/she may elect to continue his/her coverage as a Dependent of such Employee/Participant.

Application for coverage due to a Change in Status must be made on the Plan's enrollment platform, within thirty (30) days immediately following the date the Employee becomes or ceases to be an eligible Employee. A Change in Status will not be deemed to be a break or termination of coverage and will not operate to reduce or increase any coverage or accumulations toward satisfaction of the Deductible and Out-of-Pocket Maximum to which the Covered Person was entitled prior to the Change in Status.

If an Employee has a change in premium contributions as a result of the Change in Status, the Employee may add coverage or terminate coverage. This change will become effective the first day of the month following the change in status.

EFFECT OF SECTION 125 TAX REGULATIONS ON THIS PLAN

Generally changes in coverage are only allowed during Open Enrollment Period or Special Enrollment. However, the Employer has chosen to administer this Plan in accordance with Section 125 regulations of the Internal Revenue Code. Per this regulation, a Participant can make corresponding changes during the year if he/she has a "Change in Status". Changes as a result of a Change in Status will become effective on the first day of the month following the date of event, provided the Participant contacts Human Resources Department and application for such change is made on the Plan's enrollment platform within thirty (30) days of the event.

Change in Status events include the following:

1. Change of Status. Change in status is defined as:
 - A. Change in legal marital status due to marriage, death of a spouse, divorce or annulment;

Effective Date of Coverage

- B. Change in number of Dependents due to birth, adoption, placement for adoption, or death of a Dependent;
 - C. Change in employment status of Employee, Dependent spouse or Dependent child due to termination or start of employment, strike, lockout, beginning or end of unpaid leave of absence, including under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or change in worksite;
 - D. Changes in employment status of Employee, Dependent spouse or Dependent child resulting in eligibility or ineligibility for coverage;
 - E. Change in residence of Employee, Dependent spouse or Dependent child to a location outside of the Employer's network service area; and
 - F. Changes which cause a Dependent to become eligible or ineligible for coverage.
2. Court Order. A change in coverage due to and consistent with a court order of the Employee or other person to cover a Dependent.
 3. Medicare or Medicaid Eligibility/Entitlement. The Employee, spouse or Dependent cancels or reduces coverage due to entitlement to Medicare or Medicaid, or enrolls or increases coverage due to loss of Medicare or Medicaid eligibility.
 4. Change in Cost of Coverage. If the cost of benefits increases or decreases during a Benefit Period, the Employer may, in accordance with plan terms, automatically change the Participant's elective contribution.

When the change in cost is significant, the Participant may either increase contribution or elect less-costly coverage. When a significant overall reduction is made to the plan option elected, the Participant may elect another available plan option. When a new plan option is added, the Participant may change election to the new plan option.

5. Changes in Coverage of Dependent Spouse or Dependent child Under Another Employer's Plan

The Participant may make a coverage election change if the plan of the Participant's Dependent spouse or Dependent child: incurs a change such as adding or deleting a plan option; allows election changes due to Change in Status, Court Order or Medicare or Medicaid Eligibility/Entitlement; or this Plan and the other plan have different periods of coverage or open enrollment periods.

Please refer to the Employer's Section 125 Cafeteria Plan for more information.

QUALIFIED MEDICAL CHILD SUPPORT ORDERS PROVISION

PURPOSE

Pursuant to Section 609(a) of ERISA, the Plan Administrator adopts the following procedures to determine whether Medical Child Support Orders are qualified in accordance with ERISA's requirements, to administer payments and other provisions under Qualified Medical Child Support Orders (QMCSOs), and to enforce these procedures as legally required. Employer adopts ERISA standards to comply with child support enforcement obligation of Part D of Title IV of the Social Security Act of 1975 as amended.

DEFINITIONS

For QMCSO requirements, the following definitions apply:

1. "Alternate Recipient" means any child of a Participant who is recognized under a Medical Child Support Order as having a right to enroll in this Plan with respect to the Participant.
2. "Medical Child Support Order" means any state or court judgment, decree or order (including approval of settlement agreement) issued by a court of competent jurisdiction, or issued through an administrative process established under State law and which has the same force and effect of law under applicable State law and:
 - A. Provides for child support for a child of a Participant under this Plan; or
 - B. Provides for health coverage for such a child under state domestic relations laws (including community property laws) and relates to benefits under this Plan; and
 - C. Is made pursuant to a law relating to medical child support described in Section 1908 of the Social Security Act.
3. "Plan" means this self-funded Employee Health Benefit Plan, including all supplements and amendments in effect.
4. "Qualified Medical Child Support Order" means a Medical Child Support Order which creates (including assignment of rights) or recognizes an Alternate Recipient's right to receive benefits to which a Participant or Qualified Beneficiary is eligible under this Plan, and has been determined by the Plan Administrator to meet the qualification requirements as outlined under "Procedures" of this provision.

CRITERIA FOR A QUALIFIED MEDICAL CHILD SUPPORT ORDER

To be qualified, a Medical Child Support Order must clearly:

1. Specify the name and the last known mailing address (if any) of the Participant and the name and mailing address of each Alternate Recipient covered by the order, except that, to the extent provided in the order, the name and mailing address of an official of a State or a political subdivision thereof may be substituted for the mailing address of any such Alternate Recipient; and
2. Include a reasonable description of the type of coverage to be provided by the Plan to each Alternate Recipient, or the manner in which such type of coverage is to be determined; and
3. Specify each period to which such order applies.

Qualified Medical Child Support Orders Provision

In order to be qualified, a Medical Child Support Order must not require the Plan to provide any type or form of benefits, or any option, not otherwise provided under the Plan except to the extent necessary to meet the requirements of Section 1908 of the Social Security Act (relating to enforcement of state laws regarding child support and reimbursement of Medicaid).

PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFICATIONS AND DETERMINATIONS

In the case of any Medical Child Support Order received by this Plan:

1. The Plan Administrator will promptly notify the Participant and each Alternate Recipient of the receipt of such order and the plan's procedures for determining whether Medical Child Support Orders are qualified orders; and
2. Within a reasonable period after receipt of such order, the Plan Administrator will determine whether such order is a Qualified Medical Child Support Order and notify the Participant and each Alternate Recipient of such determination.

NATIONAL MEDICAL SUPPORT NOTICE

If the Plan Administrator of a group health plan which is maintained by the Employer of a non-custodial parent of a child, or to which such an employer contributes, receives an appropriately completed National Medical Support Notice as described in Section 401(b) of the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 in the case of such child, and the Notice meets the criteria shown above for a qualified order, the Notice will be deemed to be a Qualified Medical Child Support Order in the case of such child.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT OF 1993

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requires Employers who are subject to FMLA to allow their “eligible” Employees to take unpaid, job-protected leave. The Employer may also require or allow the Employee to substitute appropriate paid leave including, but not limited to, vacation and sick leave, if the Employee has earned or accrued it. The maximum leave required by FMLA is twelve (12) workweeks in any twelve (12) month period for certain family and medical reasons and a maximum combined total of twenty-six (26) workweeks during any twelve (12) month period for certain family and medical reasons and for a serious injury or illness of a member of the Armed Forces to allow the Employee, who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin to the member of the Armed Forces, to care for that member of the Armed Forces. In certain cases, this leave may be taken on an intermittent basis rather than all at once, or the Employee may work a part-time schedule.

DEFINITIONS

For these Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 provisions only, the following definitions apply:

1. “Member of the Armed Forces” includes members of the National Guard or Reserves who are undergoing medical treatment, recuperation or therapy.
2. “Next of Kin” means the nearest blood relative to the service member.
3. “Parent” means Employee’s biological parent or someone who has acted as Employee’s parent in place of Employee’s biological parent when Employee was a son or daughter.
4. “Serious health condition” means an illness, injury impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves:
 - A. Inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical facility; or
 - B. Continuing treatment by a health care provider (a doctor of medicine or osteopathy who is authorized to practice medicine or surgery as appropriate, by the state in which the doctor practices or any other person determined by the Secretary of Labor to be capable of providing health care services).
5. “Serious injury or illness” means an injury or illness incurred in the line of duty that may render the member of the Armed Forces medically unfit to perform his or her military duties.
6. “Son or daughter” means Employee’s biological child, adopted child, stepchild, legal foster child, a child placed in Employee’s legal custody, or a child for which Employee is acting as the parent in place of the child’s natural blood related parent. The child must be:
 - A. Under the age of eighteen (18); or
 - B. Over the age of eighteen (18), but incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability.
7. “Spouse” means a husband or wife as defined or recognized under state law for purposes of marriage in the state where the Employee resides, including common law marriage and same-sex marriage.

EMPLOYERS SUBJECT TO FMLA

In general, FMLA applies to any employer engaged in interstate commerce or in any industry or activity affecting interstate commerce who employs 50 or more Employees for each working day during each of 20 or more calendar work weeks in the current or preceding Calendar Year. FMLA also applies to those persons described in Section 3(d) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, 29 U.S.C. 203(d). The FMLA applies to government entities, including branches of the United States government, state governments and political subdivisions thereof.

ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

Generally, an Employee is eligible for FMLA leave only if the Employee satisfies all of the following requirements as of the date on which any requested FMLA leave is to commence: (1) has been employed by the Employer for a total of at least twelve months (whether consecutive or not); (2) the Employee has worked (as defined under the Fair Labor Standards Act) at least 1,250 hours during the twelve-(12) month period immediately preceding the date the requested leave is to commence; (3) the Employee is employed in any state of the United States, the District of Columbia or any Territories or possession of the United States; and (4) at the time the leave is requested, the Employee is employed at a work site where 50 or more Employees are employed by the Employer within 75 surface miles of the work site.

REASONS FOR TAKING LEAVE

FMLA leave must be granted (1) to care for the Employee's newborn child; (2) to care for a child Placed For Adoption or foster care with the Employee ; (3) to care for the Employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition; (4) because the Employee's own serious health condition prevents the Employee from performing his or her job; or (5) because of a qualifying exigency, as determined by the Secretary of Labor, arising out of the fact that a spouse, son, daughter or parent of the Employee is on active duty or has been called to active duty in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation (i.e., a war or national emergency declared by the President or Congress).

ADVANCE NOTICE AND MEDICAL CERTIFICATION

Ordinarily, an Employee must provide thirty (30) days advance notice when the requested leave is "foreseeable." If the leave is not foreseeable, the Employee must notify the Employer as soon as is practicable, generally within one to two working days. An employer may require medical certification to substantiate a request for leave requested due to a serious health condition. If the leave is due to the Employee's serious health condition, the Employer may require second or third opinions, at the Employer's expense, and a certification of fitness to return to work prior to allowing the Employee to return to work.

PROTECTION OF JOB BENEFITS

For the duration of FMLA leave, the Employer must maintain the Employee's health coverage under any "group health plan" on the same conditions as coverage would have been provided if the Employee had been in Active Service during FMLA leave period. Taking FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an Employee's leave, unless the loss would have occurred even if the Employee had been in Active Service.

UNLAWFUL ACTS BY EMPLOYERS

Employers cannot interfere with, restrain or deny the exercise of any right provided under the FMLA or to manipulate circumstances to avoid responsibilities under the FMLA. Employers may not discharge, or discriminate against any person who opposes any practice made unlawful by the FMLA or who may be involved in a proceeding under or relating to the FMLA.

ENFORCEMENT

The U.S. Department of Labor is authorized to investigate and resolve complaints of FMLA violations. An eligible Employee may also bring a civil action against an employer for FMLA violations. The FMLA does not supersede any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination, and does not supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights. For additional information, contact the nearest office of Wage and Hour Division, listed in most telephone directories under U.S. Government, Department of Labor.

TERMINATION OF COVERAGE

PARTICIPANT TERMINATION

Participant coverage will automatically terminate immediately upon the earliest of the following dates, except as provided in any Continuation of Coverage Provision:

1. On the last day of the month in which the Participant's employment terminates; or
2. On the last day of the month in which the Participant ceases to be eligible for coverage; or
3. The date the Participant fails to make any required contribution for coverage; or
4. The date the Plan is terminated; or
5. The date the Employer terminates the Participant's coverage; or
6. The date the Participant dies; or
7. On the last day of the month in which the Plan receives a Request for Change Form for the Participant; or
8. For variable hour Employees on the last day of the Coverage Period, unless at the expiration of the Coverage Period, the Participant is otherwise eligible as the result of a subsequent Measurement Period or as a result of being reclassified as a full-time Employee.

A Participant whose Active Service ceases because of illness or injury or as a result of any other approved leave of absence may remain covered as an Employee in Active Service for a period of twelve (12) weeks or such other length of time that is consistent with and stated in the Employer's current Leave of Absence policy or pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act. Coverage under this provision will be subject to all the provisions of FMLA if the leave is classified as FMLA leave.

A Participant whose Active Service ceases due to temporary layoff will be considered employed by the Employer for the purposes of his/her coverage under this Plan, and such coverage may continue for a length of time that is consistent with and stated in the Employer's current Leave of Absence policy.

If a Participant's coverage is to be continued during disability, approved leave of absence or temporary layoff, the amount of his or her coverage will be the same as the Plan benefits in force for an active Employee, subject to the Plan's right to amend coverage and benefits.

RETIREE TERMINATION

Coverage for the Retiree or Dependent spouse or domestic partner of a Retiree will automatically terminate immediately upon the earliest of the following dates, except as provided in any Continuation of Coverage Provision:

1. On the last day of the month in which the Retiree ceases to be eligible for coverage; or
2. The date the Retiree fails to make any required contribution for coverage; or
3. The date the Plan is terminated; or
4. The date the Employer terminates the Retiree's coverage; or
5. The date the Retiree or Dependent spouse or domestic partner of a Retiree dies.

DEPENDENT TERMINATION

Each Covered Person, whether Participant or Dependent, is responsible for notifying the Plan Administrator, within sixty (60) days after loss of dependent status due to death, divorce, legal separation or ceasing to be an eligible Dependent child. Failure to provide this notice may result in loss of eligibility for COBRA Continuation Coverage After Termination.

Coverage for a Dependent will automatically terminate immediately upon the earliest of the following dates, except as provided in any Continuation of Coverage Provision:

1. On the last day of the month in which the Dependent ceases to be an eligible Dependent as defined in the Plan; or
2. On the last day of the month in which the Participant's coverage terminates under the Plan; or
3. On the last day of the month in which the Participant ceases to be eligible for Dependent Coverage; or
4. The date the Participant fails to make any required contribution for Dependent Coverage; or
5. The date the Plan is terminated; or
6. The date the Employer terminates the Dependent's coverage; or
7. On the last day of the month in which the Participant dies; or
8. On the last day of the month in which the Plan receives a Request for Change Form for the Dependent whose coverage is to be terminated.

REINSTATEMENT OF COVERAGE

An Employee whose coverage terminates by reason of termination of employment or reduction in hours and who again becomes eligible for coverage under the Plan within a thirteen (13) week period immediately following the date of such termination of employment or reduction in hours will become eligible for reinstatement of coverage on the date of renewed eligibility. Coverage will be reinstated for the Employee and eligible Dependents on the date of renewed eligibility, if covered on the date of termination, provided that application for such coverage is made on the Plan's enrollment platform within thirty (30) days after the date of renewed eligibility.

If renewed eligibility occurs under any circumstances other than as stated in this subsection, enrollment for coverage for the Employee and his/her Dependents will be treated as if initially hired for purposes of eligibility and coverage under this Plan.

The Reinstatement of Coverage provision is not applicable to a variable hour Employee except for any period of time that the variable hour Employee is actually enrolled and covered during the Coverage Period.

CONTINUATION COVERAGE AFTER TERMINATION

Under Title X of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA), as amended, Employees and their enrolled Dependents may have the right to continue coverage beyond the time coverage would ordinarily have ended. The law applies to employers who normally employ twenty (20) or more Employees.

The Plan Administrator is the Executive Director of Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium, 16201 E. Indiana Ave, Spokane Valley, Washington 99216; (509) 789-8375. COBRA Continuation Coverage for the Plan is administered by Allegiance COBRA Services, Inc.; P.O. Box 2097, Missoula, MT 59806, (406) 721-2222; facsimile (406) 523-3131; email COBRAinquire@askallegiance.com.

COBRA Continuation Coverage is available to any Qualified Beneficiary whose coverage would otherwise terminate due to any Qualifying Event. COBRA Continuation Coverage under this provision will begin on the first day following the date of the Qualifying Event.

1. Qualifying Events for Participants, for purposes of this section, are the following events, if such event results in a loss of coverage under this Plan:
 - A. The termination (other than by reason of gross misconduct) of the Participant's employment.
 - B. The reduction in hours of the Participant's employment.
2. Qualifying Events for covered Dependents, for purposes of this section are the following events, if such event results in a loss of coverage under this Plan:
 - A. Death of the Participant or Retiree.
 - B. Termination of the Participant's employment.
 - C. Reduction in hours of the Participant's employment.
 - D. The divorce or legal separation of the Participant or Retiree from his or her spouse.
 - E. A covered Dependent child ceases to be a Dependent as defined by the Plan.

NOTIFICATION RESPONSIBILITIES

The Covered Person must notify the Employer of the following Qualifying Events within sixty (60) days after the date the event occurs. The Employer must notify the Plan Administrator of any of the following:

1. Death of the Participant or Retiree.
2. The divorce or legal separation of the Participant or Retiree from his or her spouse.
3. A covered Dependent child ceases to be a Dependent as defined by the Plan.

The Employer must notify the Plan Administrator of the following Qualifying Events within thirty (30) days after the date of the event occurs:

1. Termination (other than by reason of gross misconduct) of the Participant's employment.
2. Reduction in hours of the Participant's employment.

ELECTION OF COVERAGE

When the Plan Administrator is notified of a Qualifying Event, the Plan Administrator will notify the Qualified Beneficiary of the right to elect continuation of coverage. Notice of the right to COBRA Continuation Coverage will be sent by the Plan no later than fourteen (14) days after the Plan Administrator is notified of the Qualifying Event.

A Qualified Beneficiary has sixty (60) days from the date coverage would otherwise be lost or sixty (60) days from the date of notification from the Plan Administrator, whichever is later, to notify the Plan Administrator that he or she elects to continue coverage under the Plan. Failure to elect continuation within that period will cause coverage to end.

MONTHLY PREMIUM PAYMENTS

A Qualified Beneficiary is responsible for the full cost of continuation coverage. Monthly premium for continuation of coverage must be paid in advance to the Plan Administrator. The premium required under the provisions of COBRA is as follows:

1. For a Qualified Beneficiary: The premium is the same as applicable to any other similarly situated non-COBRA Participant plus an additional administrative expense of up to a maximum of two percent (2%).
2. Social Security Disability: For a Qualified Beneficiary continuing coverage beyond eighteen (18) months due to a documented finding of disability by the Social Security Administration within 60 days after becoming covered under COBRA, the premium may be up to a maximum of 150% of the premium applicable to any other similarly situated non-COBRA Participant.
3. For a Qualified Beneficiary with a qualifying Social Security Disability who experiences a second Qualifying Event:
 - A. If another Qualifying Event occurs during the initial eighteen (18) months of COBRA coverage, such as a death, divorce, legal separation, the monthly fee for qualified disabled person may be up to a maximum of one hundred and two percent (102%) of the applicable premium.
 - B. If the second Qualifying Event occurs during the nineteenth (19th) through the twenty-ninth (29th) month (the Disability Extension Period), the premium for a Qualified Beneficiary may be up to a maximum of one hundred fifty percent (150%) of the applicable premium.

Payment of claims while covered under this COBRA Continuation Coverage Provision will be contingent upon the receipt by the Employer of the applicable monthly premium for such coverage. The monthly premium for continuation coverage under this provision is due the first of the month for each month of coverage. A grace period of thirty (30) days from the first of the month will be allowed for payment. Payment will be made in a manner prescribed by the Employer.

DISABILITY EXTENSION OF 18-MONTH PERIOD OF CONTINUATION COVERAGE

If the Qualified Beneficiary who is covered under the Plan is determined by the Social Security Administration to be disabled at any time before the qualifying event or within sixty (60) days after the qualifying event, and the Plan Administrator is notified in a timely fashion, the Qualified Beneficiary covered under the Plan can receive up to an additional 11 months of COBRA Continuation Coverage, for a total maximum of 29 months. The Plan Administrator must be provided with a copy of the Social Security Administration's disability determination letter within sixty (60) days after the date of the determination and before the end of the original 18-month period of COBRA Continuation Coverage. This notice should be sent to: Allegiance COBRA Services, Inc.; P.O. Box 2097, Missoula, MT 59806; facsimile (406) 523-3131; email COBRAInquire@askallegiance.com.

SECOND QUALIFYING EVENT EXTENSION OF 18-MONTH PERIOD OF CONTINUATION COVERAGE

If another qualifying event occurs while receiving COBRA Continuation Coverage, the spouse and dependent children of the Employee can get additional months of COBRA Continuation Coverage, up to a maximum of thirty-six (36) months. This extension is available to the spouse and dependent children if the former employee dies or becomes divorced or legally separated. The extension is also available to a dependent child when that child stops being eligible under the Plan as a dependent child. **In all of these cases, the Plan Administrator must be notified of the second qualifying event within sixty (60) days of the second qualifying event. This notice must be sent to: Allegiance COBRA Services, Inc.; P.O. Box 2097, Missoula, MT 59806; facsimile (406) 523-3131; email COBRAinquire@askallegiance.com. Failure to provide notice within the time required will result in loss of eligibility for COBRA Continuation Coverage.**

MEDICARE ENROLLMENT EXTENSION OF 18-MONTH PERIOD OF CONTINUATION COVERAGE

The dependents of a former employee are eligible to elect COBRA Continuation Coverage if they lose coverage as a result of the former employee's enrollment in Part A or Part B of Medicare, whichever occurs earlier.

When the former employee enrolls in Medicare before the Qualifying Event of termination, or reduction in hours, of employment occurs, the maximum period for COBRA Continuation Coverage for the spouse and dependent children ends on the later of:

1. Eighteen (18) months after the Qualifying Event of termination of employment or reduction in hours of employment; or
2. Thirty-six (36) months after the former employee's enrollment in Medicare.

When the former employee enrolls in Medicare after the Qualifying Event of termination, or reduction in hours, of employment, the maximum period for COBRA Continuation Coverage for the spouse and dependent children ends eighteen (18) months after the Qualifying Event, unless a second Qualifying Event, as described above occurs within that eighteen (18) month period.

WHEN COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE ENDS

COBRA Continuation Coverage and any coverage under the Plan that has been elected with respect to any Qualified Beneficiary will cease on the earliest of the following:

1. On the date the Qualified Beneficiary becomes covered under another group health plan or health insurance.
2. On the date, after the date of election for COBRA Continuation Coverage, that the Qualified Beneficiary becomes enrolled in Medicare (either Part A or B).
3. On the first date that timely payment of any premium required under the Plan with respect to COBRA Continuation Coverage for a Qualified Beneficiary is not made to the Plan Administrator.
4. On the date the Employer ceases to provide any group health plan coverage to any Employee.
5. On the date of receipt of written notice that the Qualified Beneficiary wishes to terminate COBRA Continuation Coverage.
6. On the date that the maximum coverage period for COBRA Continuation Coverage ends, as follows:
 - A. Eighteen (18) months for a former employee who is a Qualified Beneficiary as a result of termination, or reduction in hours, of employment;

Continuation Coverage After Termination

- B. Eighteen (18) months for a Dependent who is a Qualified Beneficiary unless a second Qualifying Event occurs within that eighteen month period entitling that Dependent to an additional eighteen (18) months;
 - C. For the Dependent who is a Qualified Beneficiary as a result of termination, or reduction in hours, of employment of the former employee if that former employee enrolled in Medicare before termination, or reduction in hours, of employment, the later of eighteen (18) months from the Qualifying Event, or thirty-six (36) months following the date of enrollment in Medicare.
 - D. On the first day of the month beginning thirty (30) days after a Qualified Beneficiary is determined to be no longer disabled by the Social Security Administration if the Qualified Beneficiary was found to be disabled on or within the first sixty (60) days of the date of the Qualifying Event and has received at least eighteen (18) months of COBRA Continuation Coverage. COBRA Continuation Coverage will also terminate on such date for all Dependents who are Qualified Beneficiaries as a result of the Qualifying Event unless that Dependent is entitled to a longer period of COBRA Continuation Coverage without regard to disability.
 - E. Twenty-nine (29) months for any Qualified Beneficiary if a Disability Extension Period of COBRA Continuation Coverage has been granted for such Qualified Beneficiary.
7. On the same basis that the Plan can terminate for cause the coverage of a similarly situated non-COBRA Participant.

OPTIONS OTHER THAN COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE

Instead of enrolling in COBRA Continuation Coverage, there may be other coverage options for Employees and their enrolled Dependents through the Health Insurance Marketplace, Medicaid or other group health plan coverage options (such as a spouse's plan) through what is called a "special enrollment period". Some of these options may cost less than COBRA Continuation Coverage. For more information visit www.HealthCare.gov.

In general for a person who is still employed, if enrollment in Medicare Part A or Part B is not made when first eligible, after the Medicare initial enrollment period, there is an 8-month special enrollment period to sign up for Medicare Part A or Part B, beginning on the earlier of:

- 1. The month after employment ends; or
- 2. The month after group health plan coverage based on current employment ends.

A Covered Person who elects COBRA Continuation Coverage instead of enrolling in Medicare may result in a significant surcharge by Medicare for late enrollment in Part B and there may be a gap in coverage if enrolling for Part B at a later time. If a Covered Person elects COBRA Continuation Coverage and later enrolls for Medicare Part A or Part B before the COBRA Continuation Coverage ends, the Plan may terminate COBRA Continuation Coverage for this individual. However, if Medicare Part A and Part B is effective on or before the date of the COBRA election, COBRA Continuation coverage may not be discontinued on account of Medicare entitlement, even if enrollment is made in the other part of Medicare after the date of the election of COBRA Continuation Coverage.

If enrolling in both COBRA Continuation Coverage and Medicare, Medicare will generally pay first (primary payer) and COBRA Continuation Coverage will pay second (secondary payer). Certain plans may pay as if secondary to Medicare, even if not enrolled in Medicare.

For more information visit <https://www.medicare.gov/medicare-and-you>.

QUESTIONS

Any questions about COBRA Continuation Coverage should be directed to Allegiance COBRA Services, Inc. or contact the nearest Regional or District Office of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA). Addresses and phone numbers of Regional and District EBSA Offices are available through EBSA's website at www.dol.gov/ebsa. For more information about the Marketplace visit www.HealthCare.gov.

INFORM THE PLAN OF ADDRESS CHANGES

In order to protect the Employee's family's rights, the Employee should keep the Plan Administrator informed of any changes in the addresses of family members. The Employee should also keep a copy, for his/her records, of any notices sent to the Plan Administrator.

CONTINUATION COVERAGE FOR DOMESTIC PARTNERS

An eligible domestic partner of an Employee does not have any COBRA Continuation Coverage rights under this Plan. However, in the event that an Employee elects COBRA Continuation Coverage due to a Qualifying Event, an eligible domestic partner of such Employee and eligible Dependent children of a domestic partner of such an Employee who are covered under this Plan on the date of the Qualifying Event may remain covered as Dependents of the Employee only as long as the Employee is covered under COBRA Continuation Coverage. **Neither a domestic partner or his/her Dependent children will be considered COBRA Qualified Beneficiaries for any reason.**

COVERAGE FOR A MILITARY RESERVIST

To the extent required by the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), the following provisions will apply:

1. If a Participant is absent from employment with Employer by reason of service in the uniformed services, the Participant may elect to continue coverage under this Plan for himself or herself and his or her eligible Dependents as provided in this subsection. The maximum period of coverage under such an election will be the lesser of:
 - A. The twenty-four (24) month period beginning on the date on which the Participant's absence begins; or
 - B. The period beginning on the date on which the Participant's absence begins and ending on the day after the date on which the Participant fails to apply for or return to a position of employment, as required by USERRA.
2. A Participant who elects to continue Plan coverage under this Section may be required to pay not more than one hundred two percent (102%) of the full premium under the Plan (determined in the same manner as the applicable premium under Section 4980B(f)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) associated with such coverage for the Employer's other Employees, except that in the case of a person who performs service in the uniformed services for less than thirty-one (31) days, such person may not be required to pay more than the regular Employee share, if any, for such coverage.
3. In the case of a Participant whose coverage under the Plan is terminated by reason of service in the uniformed services, an exclusion or Waiting Period may not be imposed in connection with the reinstatement of such coverage upon reemployment if an exclusion or Waiting Period would not have been imposed under the Plan had coverage of such person by the Plan not been terminated as a result of such service. This paragraph applies to the Employee who notifies the Employer of his or her intent to return to employment in a timely manner as defined by USERRA, and is reemployed and to any Dependent who is covered by the Plan by reason of the reinstatement of the coverage of such Employee. **This provision will not apply to the coverage of any illness or injury determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to have been caused by or aggravated during, performance of service in the uniformed services.**
4. The requirements of this section shall not supersede any anti discrimination in coverage requirement promulgated by TRICARE or CHAMPVA related to eligibility for those coverages.

COVERAGE FOR A MONTANA NATIONAL GUARD MEMBER

To the extent required by the Montana Military Service Employment Rights Act (MMSERA), the following provisions will apply:

“State Active Duty” means duty performed by a Montana National Guard member when a disaster is declared by the proper State authority and shall include the time period as certified by a licensed physician to recover from an Illness or Injury incurred while performing the state active duty.

1. In any case in which a Participant has coverage under this Plan, and such Participant is absent from employment with Employer by reason of State Active Duty, the Participant may elect to continue coverage under this Plan for himself or herself and his or her eligible Dependents as provided in this subsection. The maximum period of coverage under such an election shall be the period beginning on the thirty-first consecutive day of State Active Duty and ending on the day immediately before the day the Participant returns to a position of employment with the Employer, provided the Participant returns to employment in a timely manner, or ending on the day immediately after the day the Participant fails to return to a position of employment in a timely manner.

For purposes of this subsection, a timely manner means the following:

- A. For State Active Duty of thirty (30) days but not more than one hundred eighty (180) days, the next regularly scheduled day of Active Service following fourteen (14) days after the termination of State Active Duty.
 - B. For State Active Duty of more than one hundred eighty (180) days, the next regularly scheduled day of Active Service following ninety (90) days after the termination of State Active Duty.
2. An eligible Participant who elects to continue Plan coverage under this Section may be required to pay:
 - A. Not more than one hundred percent (100%) of the contribution required from a similarly situated active Employee until such Participant becomes eligible for coverage under the State of Montana Health Benefit Plan as an employee of the Department of Military Affairs.
 - B. Not more than one hundred two percent (102%) of the contribution required from a similarly situated active Employee for any period of time that the Participant is also eligible for coverage under the State of Montana Health Benefit Plan as an employee of the Department of Military Affairs.
 3. In the case of a person whose coverage under the Plan is terminated by reason of State Active Duty, a Waiting Period may not be imposed in connection with the reinstatement of such coverage upon reemployment if such an exclusion or Waiting Period would not have been imposed under the Plan had coverage of such person by the Plan not been terminated as a result of such service. This paragraph applies to the Employee who is reemployed in a timely manner as defined by MMSERA and to any Dependent who is covered by the Plan by reason of the reinstatement of the coverage of such Employee.
 4. **In no event will this Plan cover any Illness or Injury determined by the Montana Department of Military Affairs to have been caused by or aggravated during, performance of State Active Duty.**
 5. The requirements of this section shall not supersede any anti discrimination in coverage requirement promulgated by TRICARE or CHAMPVA related to eligibility for those coverages.

FRAUD AND ABUSE

THIS PLAN IS SUBJECT TO FEDERAL LAW WHICH PERMITS CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR FRAUDULENT ACTS COMMITTED AGAINST THE PLAN. STATE LAW MAY ALSO APPLY.

Anyone who knowingly defrauds or tries to defraud the Plan, or obtains Plan funds through false statements or fraudulent schemes, may be subject to criminal prosecution and penalties. The following may be considered fraudulent:

1. Falsifying eligibility criteria for a Dependent to get or continue coverage for that Dependent when not otherwise eligible for coverage;
2. Falsifying or withholding medical history or information required to calculate benefits;
3. Falsifying or altering documents to get coverage or benefits;
4. Permitting a person not otherwise eligible for coverage to use a Plan ID card to get Plan benefits; or
5. Submitting a fraudulent claim or making untruthful statements to the Plan to get reimbursement from the Plan for services that may or may not have been provided to a Covered Person;

The Plan Administrator, in its sole discretion, may take additional action against the Participant or Covered Person including, but not limited to, terminating the Participant or Covered Person's coverage under the Plan.

MISSTATEMENT OF AGE

If the Covered Person's age was misstated on an enrollment form or claim, the Covered Person's eligibility or amount of benefits, or both, will be adjusted to reflect the Covered Person's true age. If the Covered Person was not eligible for coverage under the Plan or for the amount of benefits received, the Plan has a right to recover any benefits paid by the Plan. A misstatement of age will not continue coverage that was otherwise properly terminated or terminate coverage that is otherwise validly in force.

MISREPRESENTATION OF ELIGIBILITY

If a Participant misrepresents a Dependent's marital status, age, full-time student status, dependent child relationship or other eligibility criteria to get coverage for that Dependent, when he or she would not otherwise be eligible, coverage for that Dependent will terminate as though never effective.

MISUSE OF IDENTIFICATION CARD

If a Covered Person permits any person who is not otherwise eligible as a Covered Person to use an ID card, the Plan Sponsor may, at the Plan Sponsor's sole discretion, terminate the Covered Person's coverage.

REIMBURSEMENT TO PLAN

Payment of benefits by the Plan for any person who was not otherwise eligible for coverage under this Plan but for whom benefits were paid based upon fraud as defined in this section must be reimbursed to the Plan by the Participant. Failure to reimburse the Plan upon request may result in an interruption or a loss of benefits by the Participant and Dependents.

RECOVERY/REIMBURSEMENT/SUBROGATION

By enrollment in this Plan, Covered Persons agree to the provisions of this section as a condition precedent to receiving benefits under this Plan. Failure of a Covered Person to comply with the requirements of this section may result in the Plan pending the payment of benefits.

RIGHT TO RECOVER BENEFITS PAID IN ERROR

If the Plan makes a payment in error to or on behalf of a Covered Person or an assignee of a Covered Person to which that Covered Person is not entitled, or if the Plan pays a claim that is not covered, the Plan has the right to recover the payment from the person paid or anyone else who benefitted from the payment. The Plan can deduct the amount paid from the Covered Person's future benefits, or from the benefits for any covered Family member even if the erroneous payment was not made on that Family member's behalf.

Payment of benefits by the Plan for any person who was not otherwise eligible for coverage under this Plan, but for whom benefits were paid based upon inaccurate or false information, or information omitted by the Participant must be reimbursed to the Plan by the Participant. The Participant's failure to reimburse the Plan after demand is made, may result in an interruption in or loss of benefits to the Participant and Dependents, and could be reported to the appropriate governmental authorities for investigation of criminal fraud.

The Plan may recover such amount by any appropriate method that the Plan Administrator, in its sole discretion, will determine.

The provisions of this section apply to any Physician or Licensed Health Care Provider who receives an assignment of benefits or payment of benefits under this Plan. If a Physician or Licensed Health Care Provider fails to refund a payment of benefits, the Plan may refuse to recognize future assignments of benefits to that provider.

REIMBURSEMENT

The Plan's right to Reimbursement is separate from and in addition to the Plan's right of Subrogation. If the Plan pays benefits for medical expenses on a Covered Person's behalf, and another party was responsible or liable for payment of those medical expenses, the Plan has a right to be reimbursed by the Covered Person for the amounts the Plan paid.

Accordingly, if a Covered Person, or anyone on his or her behalf, settles, is reimbursed or recovers money from any person, corporation, entity, liability coverage, no-fault coverage, uninsured coverage, underinsured coverage, or other insurance policies or funds for any accident, Injury, condition or Illness for which benefits were provided by the Plan, the Covered Person agrees to hold the money received in trust for the benefit of the Plan. The Covered Person agrees to reimburse the Plan, in first priority, from any money recovered from a liable third party, for the amount of all money paid by the Plan to the Covered Person or on his or her behalf or that will be paid as a result of said accident, Injury, condition or Illness. Reimbursement to the Plan will be paid first, in its entirety, even if the Covered Person is not paid for all of his or her claim for damages and regardless of whether the settlement, judgment or payment he or she receives is for or specifically designates the recovery, or a portion thereof, as including health care, medical, disability or other expenses or damages.

SUBROGATION

The Plan's right to Subrogation is separate from and in addition to the Plan's right to Reimbursement. Subrogation is the right of the Plan to exercise the Covered Person's rights and remedies in order to recover from any third party who is liable to the Covered Person for a loss or benefits paid by the Plan. The Plan may proceed through litigation or settlement in the name of the Covered Person, with or without his or her consent, to recover benefits paid under the Plan.

The Covered Person agrees to subrogate to the Plan any and all claims, causes of action or rights that he or she has or that may arise against any entity who has or may have caused, contributed to or aggravated the accident, Injury, condition or Illness for which the Plan has paid benefits, and to subrogate any claims, causes of action or rights the Covered Person may have against any other coverage including, but not limited to, liability coverage, no-fault coverage, uninsured motorist coverage, underinsured motorist coverage, or other insurance policies, coverage or funds.

In the event that a Covered Person decides not to pursue a claim against any third party or insurer, the Covered Person will notify the Plan, and specifically authorize the Plan, in its sole discretion, to sue for, compromise or settle any such claims in the Covered Person's name, to cooperate fully with the Plan in the prosecution of the claims, and to execute any and all documents necessary to pursue those claims.

The Following Paragraphs Apply to Both Reimbursement and Subrogation:

1. Under the terms of this Plan, the Plan Supervisor is not required to pay any claim where there is evidence of liability of a third party unless the Covered Person signs the Plan's Third-Party Reimbursement Agreement and follows the requirements of this section. However, the Plan, in its discretion, may instruct the Plan Supervisor not to withhold payment of benefits while the liability of a party other than the Covered Person is being legally determined. If a repayment agreement is requested to be signed, the Plan's right of recovery through Reimbursement and/or Subrogation remains in effect regardless of whether the repayment agreement is actually signed.
2. If the Plan makes a payment which the Covered Person, or any other party on the Covered Person's behalf, is or may be entitled to recover against any liable third party, this Plan has a right of recovery, through reimbursement or subrogation or both, to the extent of its payment.
3. The Covered Person will cooperate fully with the Plan Administrator, its agents, attorneys and assigns, regarding the recovery of any benefits paid by the Plan from any liable third party. This cooperation includes, but is not limited to, make full and complete disclosure in a timely manner of all material facts regarding the accident, Injury, condition or Illness to the Plan Administrator; report all efforts by any person to recover any such monies; provide the Plan Administrator with any and all requested documents, reports and other information in a timely manner, regarding any demand, litigation or settlement involving the recovery of benefits paid by the Plan; and notify the Plan Administrator of the amount and source of funds received from third parties as compensation or damages for any event from which the Plan may have a reimbursement or subrogation claim.
4. Covered Persons will respond within ten (10) days to all inquiries of the Plan regarding the status of any claim they may have against any third parties or insurers including, but not limited to, liability, no-fault, uninsured and underinsured insurance coverage. The Covered Person will notify the Plan immediately of the name and address of any attorney whom the Covered Person engages to pursue any personal Injury claim on his or her behalf.
5. The Covered Person will not act, fail to act, or engage in any conduct directly, indirectly, personally or through third parties, either before or after payment by the Plan, the result of which may prejudice or interfere with the Plan's rights to recovery hereunder. The Covered Person will not conceal or attempt to conceal the fact that recovery has occurred or will occur.
6. The Plan will not pay or be responsible, without its written consent, for any fees or costs associated with a Covered Person pursuing a claim against any third party or coverage including, but not limited to, attorney fees or costs of litigation. Monies paid by the Plan will be repaid in full, in first priority, notwithstanding any anti-subrogation, "made whole," "common fund" or similar statute, regulation, prior court decision or common law theory unless a reduction or compromise settlement is agreed to in writing or required pursuant to a court order, except as limited by MCA 2-18-901 and 902, as amended.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Plan Document/Summary Plan Description is to set forth the provisions of the Plan which provide for the payment or reimbursement of all or a portion of Eligible Expenses for vision services. The terms of this Plan are legally enforceable and the Plan is maintained for the exclusive benefit of eligible Employees and their covered Dependents.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date of the Plan as restated is July 1, 2024.

PLAN YEAR

The effective date of the Plan as restated is July 1, 2024.

PLAN YEAR

The Plan Year will commence July 1 of each year and end on June 30 of each succeeding year.

PLAN SPONSOR

The Plan Sponsor is Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium.

PLAN SUPERVISOR

The Supervisor of the Plan is Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc.

NAMED FIDUCIARY AND PLAN ADMINISTRATOR

The Named Fiduciary the Executive Director or Board Chair and Plan Administrator is the Executive Director of Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium, a political subdivision of Montana, who has the authority to control and manage the operation and administration of the Plan. The Plan Administrator may delegate responsibilities for the operation and administration of the Plan. The Plan Administrator will have the authority to amend the Plan, to determine its policies, to appoint and remove other service providers of the Plan, to fix their compensation (if any), and exercise general administrative authority over them and the Plan. The Plan Administrator has the sole authority and responsibility to review and make final decisions on all claims to benefits hereunder.

PLAN INTERPRETATION

The Named Fiduciary and the Plan Administrator have full discretionary authority to interpret and apply all Plan provisions including, but not limited to, resolving all issues concerning eligibility and determination of benefits. The Plan Administrator may contract with an independent administrative firm to process claims, maintain Plan data, and perform other Plan-connected services. Final authority to interpret and apply the provisions of the Plan rests exclusively with the Plan Administrator. Decisions of the Plan Administrator made in good faith will be final and binding.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PLAN

The amount of contributions to the Plan are to be made on the following basis:

The Employer will periodically evaluate the costs of the Plan and determine the amount to be contributed by the Employer, if any, and the amount to be contributed, if any, by each Participant.

If the Employer terminates the Plan, the Employer and Participants will have no obligation to contribute to the Plan after the date of termination.

PLAN AMENDMENTS/MODIFICATION/TERMINATION

The Plan Document/Summary Plan Description contains all the terms of the Plan and may be amended at any time by the Plan Administrator. Any changes will be binding on each Participant and on any other Covered Persons referred to in this Plan Document/Summary Plan Description. The authority to amend the Plan is delegated by the Plan Administrator to the Board Chair of Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium. Any such amendment, modification, revocation or termination of the Plan will be authorized and signed by the Board Chair of Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium, pursuant to a resolution, granting that individual the authority to amend, modify, revoke or terminate this Plan. A copy of the executed resolution will be supplied to the Plan Supervisor. Written notification of any amendments, modifications, revocations or terminations will be given to Plan Participants within one-hundred and twenty (120) days of such decision, except for notices of reduction of benefits.

NOTICE OF REDUCTION OF BENEFITS

All changes or amendments to this Plan that directly or indirectly reduce any benefit or coverage under the Plan, including any increase in contribution for coverage required from a Participant, will be reported to all eligible Participants and Dependents within sixty (60) days of the date such change or amendment is adopted.

TERMINATION OF PLAN

The Employer reserves the right at any time to terminate the Plan by a written notice. All previous contributions by the Employer will continue to be issued for the purpose of paying benefits and fixed costs under provisions of this Plan with respect to claims arising before such termination, or will be used for the purpose of providing similar health benefits to Participants, until all contributions are exhausted.

PLAN DOCUMENTS/SUMMARY PLAN DESCRIPTIONS

Each Participant covered under this Plan will be issued a Plan Document/Summary Plan Description (SPD) describing the benefits to which the Covered Persons are entitled, the required Plan procedures for eligibility and claiming benefits, the limitations and exclusions of the Plan and summarizing the provisions of the Plan.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

EXAMINATION

The Plan will have the right and opportunity to have the Covered Person examined whenever Injury or Illness is the basis of a claim hereunder when and so often as it may reasonably require during pendency of the claim hereunder. The Plan will also have the right and opportunity to have an autopsy performed in case of death where it is not forbidden by law.

PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

All Plan benefits are payable to a Participant, Qualified Beneficiary or Alternate Recipient, whichever is applicable. All or a portion of any benefits payable by the Plan may, at the Covered Person's option and unless the Covered Person requests otherwise in writing not later than the time of filing the claim, be paid directly to the health care provider rendering the service, if proper written assignment is provided to the Plan. No payments will be made to any provider of services unless the Covered Person is liable for such expenses.

If any benefits remain unpaid at the time of the Covered Person's death or if the Covered Person is a minor or is, in the opinion of the Plan, legally incapable of giving a valid receipt and discharge for any payment, the Plan may, at its option, pay such benefits to the Covered Person's legal representative or estate. The Plan, in its sole option, may require that an estate, guardianship or conservatorship be established by a court of competent jurisdiction prior to the payment of any benefit. Any payment made under this subsection will constitute a complete discharge of the Plan's obligation to the extent of such payment and the Plan will not be required to oversee the application of the money so paid.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

No action at law or equity will be brought to recover on the Plan prior to the expiration of sixty (60) days after proof of loss has been filed in accordance with the requirements of the Plan, nor will such action be brought at all unless brought within three (3) years from the expiration of the time within which proof of loss is required by the Plan.

NO WAIVER OR ESTOPPEL

No term, condition or provision of this Plan will be waived, and there will be no estoppel against the enforcement of any provision of this Plan, except by written instrument of the party charged with such waiver or estoppel. No such written waiver will be deemed a continuing waiver unless specifically stated therein, and each such waiver will operate only as to the specific term or condition waived and will not constitute a waiver of such term or condition for the future or as to any act other than that specifically waived.

VERBAL STATEMENTS

Verbal statements or representations of the Plan Administrator, its agents and Employees, or Covered Persons will not create any right by contract, estoppel, unjust enrichment, waiver or other legal theory regarding any matter related to the Plan, or its administration, except as specifically stated in this subsection. No statement or representation of the Plan Administrator, its agents and Employees, or Covered Persons will be binding upon the Plan or a Covered Person unless made in writing by a person with authority to issue such a statement. This subsection will not be construed in any manner to waive any claim, right or defense of the Plan or a Covered Person based upon fraud or intentional material misrepresentation of fact or law.

FREE CHOICE OF VISION SERVICE PROVIDER

The Covered Person will have free choice of any licensed Vision Service Provider and the patient-provider relationship will be maintained.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION NOT AFFECTED

This Plan is not in lieu of, supplemental to Workers' Compensation and does not affect any requirement for coverage by Workers' Compensation Insurance.

CONFORMITY WITH LAW

If any provision of this Plan is contrary to any law to which it is subject, such provision is hereby amended to conform to the minimum requirements of the applicable law. Only that provision which is contrary to applicable law will be amended to conform; all other parts of the Plan will remain in full force and effect.

MISCELLANEOUS

Section titles are for convenience of reference only, and are not to be considered in interpreting this Plan.

No failure to enforce any provision of this Plan will affect the right thereafter to enforce such provision, nor will such failure affect its right to enforce any other provision of the Plan.

FACILITY OF PAYMENT

Whenever payments which should have been made under this Plan in accordance with this provision have been made under any other plan or plans, the Plan will have the right, exercisable alone and in its sole discretion, to pay to any insurance company or other organization or person making such other payments any amounts it determines in order to satisfy the intent of this provision. Amounts so paid will be deemed to be benefits paid under this Plan and to the extent of such payments, the Plan will be fully discharged from liability under this Plan.

The benefits that are payable will be charged against any applicable maximum payment or benefit of this Plan rather than the amount payable in the absence of this provision.

PROTECTION AGAINST CREDITORS

No benefit payment under this Plan will be subject in any way to alienation, sale, transfer, pledge, attachment, garnishment, execution or encumbrance of any kind, and any attempt to accomplish the same will be void, except an assignment of payment to a provider of Covered Services. If the Plan Administrator finds that such an attempt has been made with respect to any payment due or which will become due to any Participant, the Plan Administrator, in its sole discretion, may terminate the interest of such Participant or former Participant in such payment. In such case, the Plan Administrator will apply the amount of such payment to or for the benefit of such Participant or covered Dependents or former Participant, as the Plan Administrator may determine. Any such application will be a complete discharge of all liability of the Plan with respect to such benefit payment.

PLAN IS NOT A CONTRACT

The Plan Document/Summary Plan Description constitutes the primary authority for plan administration. The establishment, administration and maintenance of this Plan will not be deemed to constitute a contract of employment, give any Participant of the Employer the right to be retained in the service of the Employer, or to interfere with the right of the Employer to discharge or otherwise terminate the employment of any Participant.

GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Certain words and phrases in this Plan Document/Summary Plan Description are defined below and references of such words or phrases will be capitalized when used throughout the Plan Document/Summary Plan Description. The failure of a word or phrase to appear capitalized does not waive the special meaning given to that word or phrase, unless the context requires otherwise. If the defined term is not used in this document, the term does not apply to this Plan.

Masculine pronouns used in this Plan Document/Summary Plan Description will include either the masculine or feminine gender unless the context indicates otherwise.

Any words used herein in the singular or plural will include the alternative as applicable.

ACTIVE SERVICE

"Active Service" means that an Employee is in service with the Employer on a day which is one of the Employer's regularly scheduled work days and that the Employee is performing all of the regular duties of his/her employment with the Employer on a regular basis, either at one of the Employer's business establishments or at some location to which the Employer's business requires him/her to travel.

ADVERSE BENEFIT DETERMINATION

"Adverse Benefit Determination" means any of the following: a denial, reduction, or termination of, or a failure to provide or make payment, in whole or in part, for a benefit, including any such denial, reduction, termination, or failure to provide or make payment that is based on a determination of a Participant's or beneficiary's eligibility to participate in the Plan, and including, with respect to group health plans, a denial, reduction, or termination of, or a failure to provide or make payment, in whole or in part, for a benefit resulting from the application of any utilization review, as well as a failure to cover an item or service for which benefits are otherwise provided because it is determined to be Experimental or Investigational or appropriate.

BENEFIT PERIOD

"Benefit Period" refers to a time period of one year, which is either a Calendar Year or Plan Year, as shown in the Schedule of Benefits. Such Benefit Period will terminate on the earliest of the following dates:

1. The last day of the one year period so established; or
2. The day the Maximum Lifetime Benefit applicable to the Covered Person becomes paid; or
3. The date the Plan terminates.

CALENDAR YEAR

"Calendar Year" means a period of time commencing on January 1 and ending on December 31 of the same year.

CLOSE RELATIVE

"Close Relative" means the spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, or in-laws of the Covered Person.

COBRA

"COBRA" means Title X of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985, as amended.

COBRA CONTINUATION COVERAGE

“COBRA Continuation Coverage” means the coverage provided under the provisions of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 and its amendments.

COSMETIC

“Cosmetic” means services or treatment ordered or performed solely to change a Covered Person's appearance rather than for the restoration of bodily function.

COVERED PERSON

“Covered Person” means any Participant or Dependent of a Participant meeting the eligibility requirements for coverage and properly enrolled for coverage as specified in the Plan.

DEPENDENT

“Dependent” means a person who is eligible for coverage under the Dependent Eligibility subsection of this Plan.

DEPENDENT COVERAGE

“Dependent Coverage” means eligibility for coverage under the terms of the Plan for benefits payable as a consequence of Eligible Incurred Expenses for a vision condition of a Dependent.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

“Eligible Expenses” means the maximum amount of any charge for a covered service, treatment or supplies listed as Covered Services and that are not specifically excluded by the Plan and which meet all the requirements outlined in the Covered Expenses provision may be considered for payment by the Plan, including any portion of that charge that may be applied to the Deductible. Eligible Expenses are equal to the actual billed charge.

EMPLOYEE

“Employee” means a person employed by the Employer on a continuing and regular basis who is a common-law Employee and who is on the Employer's W-2 payroll.

Employee does not include any employee leased from another employer including, but not limited to, those individuals defined in Internal Revenue Code Section 414(n), or an individual classified by the Employer as a contract worker, or independent contractor if such persons are not on the Employer's W-2 payroll, or any individual who performs services for the Employer but who is paid by a temporary or other employment agency such as “Kelly,” “Manpower,” etc.

EMPLOYER

“Employer” means Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium or any affiliated agencies or boards that have adopted this Plan for its Employees.

ENROLLMENT DATE

“Enrollment Date” means the date a person becomes eligible for coverage under this Plan or the eligible person's effective date of coverage under this Plan, whichever occurs first.

ERISA

The term “ERISA” refers to the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, as amended.

FAMILY

“Family” means a Participant and his or her eligible Dependents as defined herein.

FMLA

“FMLA” means Family and Medical Leave Act.

INITIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD

“Initial Enrollment Period” means the time allowed by this Plan for enrollment when a person first becomes eligible for coverage.

LATE ENROLLMENT OR LATE ENROLLEE

“Late Enrollment” or “Late Enrollee” means an eligible person who makes application for Participant or Dependent Coverage under this Plan other than during the Initial Enrollment Period or any other enrollment opportunity provided under the terms of this Plan.

LICENSED HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

“Licensed Health Care Provider” means any provider of health care services who is licensed or certified by any applicable regulatory authority to the extent that services are within the scope of its license or certification and are not specifically excluded by this Plan.

MEDICAID

“Medicaid” means that program of vision care and coverage established and provided by Title XIX of the Social Security Act, as amended.

MEDICARE

“Medicare” means the programs established under the “Health Insurance for the Aged Act,” Public Law 89-97 under Title XVIII of the Federal Social Security Act, as amended, to pay for various medical expenses for qualified individuals, specifically those age 65 or older, those with end-stage renal disease, or with disabilities.

MMSERA

“MMSERA” means the Montana Military Service Employment Rights Act (MMSERA), as amended.

NAMED FIDUCIARY

“Named Fiduciary” means the Plan Administrator which has the authority to control and manage the operation and administration of the Plan.

PARTICIPANT

“Participant” means an Employee of the Employer who is eligible and enrolled for coverage under this Plan.

PLACEMENT OR PLACED FOR ADOPTION

“Placement” or “Placed for Adoption” means the assumption and retention of a legal obligation for total or partial support of a child by a person with whom the child has been placed in anticipation of the child’s adoption. The child’s placement for adoption with such person ends upon the termination of such legal obligation.

PLAN

“Plan” means the Vision Benefit Plan for Employees of the Employer, the Plan Document/Summary Plan Description and any other relevant documents pertinent to its operation and maintenance.

PLAN ADMINISTRATOR

“Plan Administrator” means the Executive Director of Northwest Montana School’s Health Consortium and/or its designee which is responsible for the day-to-day functions and management of the Plan. The Plan Administrator may employ persons or firms to process claims and perform other Plan-connected services. For the purposes of applicable state legislation of a similar nature, the Employer will be deemed to be the Plan Administrator of the Plan unless the Employer designates an individual or committee to act as Plan Administrator of the Plan.

PLAN SUPERVISOR

“Plan Supervisor” means the person or firm employed by the Plan to provide consulting services to the Plan in connection with the operation of the Plan and any other functions, including the processing and payment of claims. The Plan Supervisor is Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc. The Plan Supervisor provides ministerial duties only, exercises no discretion over plan assets and will not be considered a fiduciary as defined by ERISA (Employee Retirement Income Security Act) or any other State or Federal law or regulation.

QUALIFIED BENEFICIARY

“Qualified Beneficiary” means an Employee, former Employee or Dependent of an Employee or former Employee who is eligible to continue coverage under the Plan in accordance with applicable provisions of Title X of COBRA or Section 609(a) of ERISA in relation to QMCSO’s.

“Qualified Beneficiary” will also include a child born to, adopted by or placed for adoption with an Employee or former Employee at any time during COBRA Continuation Coverage.

QMCSO

“QMCSO” means Qualified Medical Child Support Order as defined by Section 609(a) of ERISA, as amended.

RETIREE

“Retiree” means an Employee who retires under a retirement program authorized by law and eligible to continue coverage with the Employer pursuant to the terms of 2-18-704, MCA, as amended from time to time.

USERRA

“USERRA” means the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, as amended.

PLAN SUMMARY

The following information, together with the information contained in this booklet, form the Plan Document/Summary Plan Description.

1. PLAN NAME

The name of the Plan is the NORTHWEST MONTANA SCHOOLS' HEALTH CONSORTIUM VISION PLAN, which Plan describes the benefits, terms, limitations and provisions for payment of benefits to or on behalf of eligible Participants.

2. PLAN BENEFITS

This Plan provides benefits for covered expenses incurred by eligible participants for:

Vision expenses.

3. PLAN EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date of the Plan as restated is July 1, 2024.

4. PLAN SPONSOR

Name: Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium
Phone: (509) 789-8375
Address: P.O. Box 494
Somers, Montana 59932

5. PLAN ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Executive Director of Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium
Phone: (509) 789-8375
Address: 16201 E. Indiana Ave.
Spokane Valley, Washington 99216

6. NAMED FIDUCIARY

Name: Executive Director of Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium
Phone: (509) 789-8375
Address: 16201 E. Indiana Ave.
Spokane Valley, Washington 99216

OR:

Name: Board Chair of Northwest Montana Schools' Health Consortium
Phone: (406) 837-7400
Address: P.O. Box 494
Somers, Montana 59932

7. PLAN FISCAL YEAR

The Plan fiscal year ends June 30.

8. PLAN YEAR

The Plan Year will commence July 1 of each year and end on June 30 of each succeeding year.

9. PLAN TERMINATION

The right is reserved by the Sponsor to terminate, suspend, withdraw, amend or modify the Plan in whole or in part at any time.

10. IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Plan Number:	501
Group Number:	0010311
Employer Identification Number:	81-4546777

11. PLAN SUPERVISOR

Name:	Allegiance Benefit Plan Management, Inc.
Address:	P.O. Box 3018 Missoula, MT 59806-3018

12. ELIGIBILITY

Employees and dependents of employees of the Sponsor may participate in the Plan based upon the eligibility requirements set forth by the Plan.

13. PLAN FUNDING

The Plan is funded by contributions from the employer and employees.

14. AGENT FOR SERVICE OF LEGAL PROCESS

The Plan Administrator has authority to control and manage the Plan and is the agent for service of legal process.
