



JOHNSTONE'S JOURNAL is published monthly, and designed to provide topical information of interest not only to plan administrators, but to all employees who enjoy coverage under the benefit plan. Feel free to make copies, and use as a payroll staffer.

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September 2011

## Benefit Coverage for Students

### Continuing benefits for over-age dependents

#### Student coverage

As your employees' adult children prepare to return to school this September, it's time to make sure that their dental and extended health benefits continue uninterrupted. Dependent children are eligible for coverage under your employee benefit program up to the age of 19 or 21, depending on your contract provisions. However, if they attend an educational institution full-time, coverage can continue to age 25 (26 in Quebec). Insurers refer to these students as over-age dependents.

#### Student declaration

Each year we include verification letters with your September invoice that request employees certify student status for each over-age dependent. If we do not receive confirmation that the child is still a student, we will determine that he or she no longer qualifies, and coverage will expire September 30<sup>th</sup>. To continue coverage for over-age dependents, the employee must indicate the educational institution that the student attends, and then sign and return the verification letter.

#### Studying away from home

An integral part of extended health care plans is the coverage for out-of-province or out-of-country medical emergencies. This component of the plan is extremely valuable for employees and their dependents because it means they don't have to purchase extra travel insurance. The intent of this coverage is to protect employees and their dependents during temporary absences for both business and pleasure. Occasionally, we learn of

dependent children who attend university in another province or country. Although this could be viewed as a temporary absence, it is not regarded as travel, but is instead considered residence in another locale.

Some insurers will consider extending coverage for dependents who are away for educational reasons, while others may apply an additional premium. When it is apparent that a dependent will reside outside of the province, it is critical to **contact our office before he or she leaves**. We will determine whether coverage can be extended, and if so, whether there is an additional cost.

When approved, however, coverage is still limited to emergencies only. A review of three different insurers' contract wording clearly illustrates their intent:

- "...an accident or unexpected illness which first occurred while travelling outside your province of residence on business or vacation."
- "...while travelling or on vacation outside your province of residence."
- "...for emergency treatment of an injury, disease or pregnancy while travelling and that is incurred during the first 90 days after the commencement of the absence from Canada."

Provincial medical coverage must also be maintained. In all cases, in order to qualify for extended health coverage (including this emergency travel coverage), each employee and dependent must maintain coverage under the provincial medical plan (e.g. MSP of BC, Alberta Health Care, OHIP). The applicable provincial medical plan must be notified of any long-term absences.