

**RCW 48.43.038 Individual health plans—Guarantee of continuity of coverage—Exceptions.** (1) Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, all individual health plans shall contain or incorporate by endorsement a guarantee of the continuity of coverage of the plan. For the purposes of this section, a plan is "renewed" when it is continued beyond the earliest date upon which, at the carrier's sole option, the plan could have been terminated for other than nonpayment of premium.

(2) The guarantee of continuity of coverage required in individual health plans shall not prevent a carrier from canceling or nonrenewing a health plan for:

(a) Nonpayment of premium;

(b) Violation of published policies of the carrier approved by the commissioner;

(c) Covered persons entitled to become eligible for medicare benefits by reason of age who fail to apply for a medicare supplement plan or medicare cost, risk, or other plan offered by the carrier pursuant to federal laws and regulations;

(d) Covered persons who fail to pay any deductible or copayment amount owed to the carrier and not the provider of health care services;

(e) Covered persons committing fraudulent acts as to the carrier;

(f) Covered persons who materially breach the health plan; or

(g) Change or implementation of federal or state laws that no longer permit the continued offering of such coverage.

(3) This section does not apply in the following cases:

(a) A carrier has zero enrollment on a product;

(b) A carrier is withdrawing from a service area or from a segment of its service area because the carrier has demonstrated to the commissioner that the carrier's clinical, financial, or administrative capacity to serve enrollees would be exceeded;

(c) No sooner than the first day of the month following the expiration of a one hundred eighty-day period beginning on March 23, 2000, a carrier discontinues offering a particular type of health benefit plan offered in the individual market if: (i) The carrier provides notice to each covered individual provided coverage of this type of such discontinuation at least ninety days prior to the date of the discontinuation; (ii) the carrier offers to each individual provided coverage of this type the option, without being subject to the standard health questionnaire, to enroll in any other individual health benefit plan currently being offered by the carrier; and (iii) in exercising the option to discontinue coverage of this type and in offering the option of coverage under (c)(ii) of this subsection, the carrier acts uniformly without regard to any health status-related factor of enrolled individuals or individuals who may become eligible for such coverage; or

(d) A carrier discontinues offering all individual health coverage in the state and discontinues coverage under all existing individual health benefit plans if: (i) The carrier provides notice to the commissioner of its intent to discontinue offering all individual health coverage in the state and its intent to discontinue coverage under all existing health benefit plans at least one hundred eighty days prior to the date of the discontinuation of coverage under all existing health benefit plans; and (ii) the carrier provides notice to each covered individual of the intent to discontinue his or her existing health benefit plan at least one hundred eighty days prior to

the date of such discontinuation. In the case of discontinuation under this subsection, the carrier may not issue any individual health coverage in this state for a five-year period beginning on the date of the discontinuation of the last health plan not so renewed. Nothing in this subsection (3) shall be construed to require a carrier to provide notice to the commissioner of its intent to discontinue offering a health benefit plan to new applicants where the carrier does not discontinue coverage of existing enrollees under that health benefit plan.

(4) The provisions of this section do not apply to health plans deemed by the commissioner to be unique or limited or have a short-term purpose, after a written request for such classification by the carrier and subsequent written approval by the commissioner. [2000 c 79 § 25.]

**Effective date—Severability—2000 c 79:** See notes following RCW 48.04.010.