Benefit Eligibility of Furloughed Employees

Group Insurance Commission

Administrative Bulletin 2020-01: Guidance Regarding Benefit Eligibility of Furloughed Employees

April 9, 2020

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Pursuant to M.G.L. Ch. 32A, § 3 and Ch. 32B §11, the Group Insurance Commission is charged with issuing information and advisory rulings in accordance with the provisions of Ch. 30A, §8. Under that authority, we issue this advisory bulletin concerning GIC benefit eligibility of employees who have been furloughed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this period, when all our members are struggling with the impact of COVID-19, the GIC prioritizes any member request to: (1) retain benefits to avoid a lapse in current insurance coverage, (2) access new benefits to which they are entitled without delay, and (3) limit or relieve, to the extent possible, financial burdens by prioritizing life insurance claim processing and by allowing reduction or elimination of optional benefits.

Under the Department of Unemployment Assistance [430 CMR 22.00: COVID 19 Emergency Regulations](#), claimants temporarily unemployed due to COVID-19 with an expected return-to-work date are classified as "Standby Status." Standby status is meant to help both employers and their employees in situations where the unemployment is expected to be temporary.

The GIC, in keeping with this definition and the three priorities outlined above, considers employees furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic to be GIC benefit-eligible provided that the employee and employer share of premiums continue to be paid. GIC does not require participating employers to report furloughs and will continue to bill participating employers for all existing participating employees in the normal course of business. If at some point in the future a furloughed employee's status changes to a non-COVID-19 layoff or termination, the participating employer should notify GIC so it can take the appropriate steps concerning the employee's coverage.

If you have questions regarding this bulletin, please submit an inquiry through the [GIC Online Contact Form](#) and select the GIC Coordinator option.