How to compare student health insurance plans – parents do the homework

A family health insurance plan may not be the best solution for a college-bound child. Considering options other than your current employer’s health insurance plan, such as a school-sponsored plan, may be worth the exercise. The family plan might not provide the coverage needed when the student is away from home, and it might even stop coverage in mid-academic year when the student reaches a certain age, perhaps 19 or 23 years old, or changes from full-time to part-time enrollment status.

Students present unique challenges and need health insurance coverage in various geographies. Parents are sometimes surprised at the true cost of student health insurance and that their children are not fully covered as they move from place to place. In addition, some family plans (including some HMO plans) consider a student’s campus health center out of its service area. For example, a student covered by an HMO from Florida may not be covered for non-emergency care in Nebraska and may have to return home for non-emergency care. Parents may face big bills for non-emergency coverage.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) works with Aetna Student Health (ASH) and Ameritas Group Dental, a division of Ameritas Life Insurance Corporation, to offer The UNL Healthy Option Student Plan, a medical and dental plan, as well as a pharmacy program, to students who attend the UNL. Coverage is also available for dependents.

Aetna Student Health has more than 25 years of experience specific to student health insurance. They work with on-campus health services to provide convenient access to care and services. ASH works with the campus health center to emphasize healthy lifestyles and prevention of illnesses.

What is the right plan for college students?

How does a parent make a choice on health insurance for his or her child? To weigh the cost and value of the school-sponsored health insurance plan versus keeping the student on the parents’ plan, parents must be prepared to do a detailed comparison of medical plan provisions. Evaluating the premium and the deductible, including total out-of-pocket expenses and the employer contributions versus the student premium, will provide a start to a comparison.

A student health insurance plan may have many of the same benefits and services as an employer plan, however, it is then customized by the school for the student population and is administered by the student health center on campus. To determine what is best for your student, ASH recommends starting with a checklist, including access to local and national providers; prescription coverage; 24-hour nurse line availability; no age restrictions; medical evacuation; travel abroad; discounts on dental and vision services; and dental plan options.
Other items to add to your checklist:
√ Visit the school’s health services center, and identify a health contact on campus.
√ Review the school’s website and literature.
√ Parents should weigh the difference between carrying a dependent on a parents’ plan with the benefits of a school plan.
√ Understand the school’s health insurance requirements.
√ Evaluate the access to care for a typical student who is traveling to school, home, work, participating in travel abroad programs.

You may want to consider The UNL Healthy Option Student Plan with Medical Dental and UHC Pharmacy Coverage if you have no insurance or if your current policy will not cover services provided at the UHC because it is out of network or will not provide coverage due to a decrease in credit hours.

It is worthwhile for parents to see the true cost and coverage of their student health insurance. Nothing is more important than your children. Preparing a sound decision-making process for choosing their health insurance, along with academic and financial planning, is the foundation for their college successes.

Additional information about The UNL Healthy Option Student Plan is available at http://health.unl.edu/insurance/benefits/. Your student can enroll for coverage by logging on to his or her WAM account and clicking on “UNL Student Insurance Enrollment” under “Other Student Services.” Visit www.aetnastudenthealth.com to find out more about Aetna Student Health. ASH provides an overview of how to evaluate the insurance options to parents on their website http://aetnastudenthealth.com/stu_conn/parents.aspx.