Group medical insurance is available through the Reformed Benefits Association (RBA). The RBA is a nonprofit corporation established by the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Churches and other eligible employers may enroll in benefits through the RBA or pay for the cost of comparable coverage for eligible ministers. In 2019, the RBA will offer four medical insurance plans. Two plans, the basic plan and the consumer plan, are high-deductible plans. The premium plan is a traditional plan, and the co-pay plan is a new plan offering.

Open enrollment through the RBA will be held October 29 through November 9, 2018. Coverage for those who enroll will begin January 1, 2019. RBA will be sending information regarding open enrollment and plan details in October. More information about the RBA can be found at www.reformedbenefits.org.

When considering a severance package for a departing pastor who is enrolled in medical insurance through the RBA, please be aware that the RBA medical plan does not allow insurance continuation as part of a severance agreement. If a church wants to provide medical insurance, they must provide the pastor with a cash amount (this is considered taxable income) and the pastor must enroll in COBRA through the RBA or find an individual plan independently.

Churches are not able to reimburse a pastor for medical insurance that is purchased through a private insurance company or through the marketplace. The cost of medical insurance must be considered taxable income.

**Minimum standards for medical insurance**

Formulary No. 5 states, “Such insurance coverages shall meet or exceed the minimum standards stipulated by the Board of Benefits Services.” The minimum standard of coverage established by the Board of Benefits Services will be met by offering coverage that approximates the consumer plan, as offered by the RBA.

The consumer plan carries a coinsurance of 80 percent, an individual deductible of $3,000, and a family deductible of $6,000. The maximum, in-network, out-of-pocket cost is $6,750 for an individual and $13,500 for a family. Coverage is 80 percent after the deductible has been met and until the out-of-pocket maximum has been reached. Once the out-of-pocket maximum has been met, the plan covers 100 percent of eligible medical expenses.
Health savings account (HSA)
A participant in the basic or consumer plan may establish a health savings account (HSA) that can be funded with pretax dollars. This HSA can be established by the employee through a local bank or credit union. Many RCA employers contribute to the HSA accounts of their minister. It is recommended that employers fund no more than half of the HSA annual maximum contribution for an individual or family. An employee may also make pretax salary deduction contributions to an HSA up to the annual maximum for an individual or family. In 2019, the HSA maximums will be $3,500 for a single person and $7,000 for two or more persons enrolled in a qualified plan.

Those over age 55 are allowed a “catch-up” contribution of $1,000 annually. An employee may not contribute to an HSA if he or she is over 65 years of age.

Life and long-term disability insurance
The BCO also requires that churches cover the premiums for group life and long-term disability (LTD) insurance for eligible RCA ministers.

RCA ministers who enroll in medical insurance through the RBA will also be enrolled in the RBA basic life plan. Participants in the RBA can enroll in supplementary life insurance plans offered through the RBA.

Eligible RCA ministers who work a minimum of 17.5 hours per week will be enrolled in the LTD insurance program administered by BOBS. In addition, RCA ministers who are not enrolled in life insurance through the RBA and who work a minimum of 17.5 hours per week will be enrolled in the group life insurance plan administered by BOBS. Eligible participants will have the opportunity to enroll in supplemental life plans through the Board of Benefits Services open enrollment period from November 12 through November 30, 2018.

Part-time ministers who regularly work a minimum of 17.5 hours and no more than 29 hours per week may be exempt from participating in the insurance programs, as stated in the BCO. To apply for an exemption from providing insurance coverage to a minister serving a church in a part-time capacity (as defined by the Board of Benefits Services), a waiver of insurance form must be completed and submitted to BOBS. The waiver is available by contacting BOBS and must be signed by the eligible minister, the consistory, and supervising classis. Ministers who work 30 hours per week or more are not eligible to be exempt from benefits.
Effective May 1, 2016, BOBS was able to expand the coverage for ministers who are enrolled in group life and LTD insurance through BOBS. Ministers without charge can continue to be covered by group life and LTD insurance for three months after an assignment. The most recent church a minister without charge served will need to pay the premium for these extended periods. Life insurance, for those enrolled through the RBA, requires that a member is actively working, so life insurance terminates as of the last day worked. Upon termination, members do have the opportunity to port/convert their policy with Reliance. Options for conversion or porting a policy is communicated in a letter from the RBA to the terminated staff.

More information about the life and LTD insurance programs offered through the Board of Benefits Services can be found at www.rca.org/ltd-and-group-life. You will also find information about 2019 insurance rates, beneficiary designation, and payment options on this page.

Per Internal Revenue Code Section 79, employer-paid group life insurance may generate taxable, imputed income. More information is available on the RCA benefits webpage (www.rca.org/benefits).

**Definition of Part Time**

Amendments to Formulary No. 5 and other parts of the BCO were proposed to the 2016 General Synod, and that synod adopted them (see MGS 2016, pp. 264–266). Following approval by the required number of classes, they were declared effective by the 2017 General Synod (see MGS 2017, p. 42). The amendments provide greater consistency between the requirements of the BCO regarding insurance benefits and what is available through third-party insurers.

Similar to the requirement that BOBS set the minimum standard for medical insurance for ministers, these amendments require BOBS to define part-time employment.

Because different vendors have varying eligibility requirements, the definition of part time will vary based on the product.

For life and LTD insurance purchased through the Board of Benefits Services, effective January 1, 2018, part time is defined as those working a minimum of 17.5 hours but not more than 29 hours per week.
A definition of part time for the RCA 403(b) retirement program is not needed because consistories are required to make contributions for all ministers serving the church under call or contract.

If insurance is obtained through the RBA, its terms of participation require that any insured member must work a minimum of 20 hours per week to be enrolled in medical, dental, and vision insurance. For further clarification, contact the RBA.

For life, LTD, and medical insurance, full time is defined as anyone working a minimum of 30 hours per week or more.