



Pension Airwaves

Episode 17 - Retirement & Survivor Benefits Program

Hello and thanks for tuning in to this short episode about UBC's Retirement & Survivor Benefits Program. Retirement & Survivor Benefits, or RSB, is a program administered by the Benefits team with UBC Human Resources. The Benefits team handles a different administrative portfolio than the Pensions team, and we are considered different units within HR, but both Benefits and Pensions are here to serve current and former UBC staff, and help them with their questions and concerns.

I'm sure many of you will agree when I say that UBC employees have access to some pretty amazing benefits that cover many facets of our overall health and wellbeing, and they're definitely a big part of why we have a unique and outstanding workplace here at the university. In fact, some benefits can continue on after we've left the university. RSB is a great example of that — the program offers three different plans, including Extended Health, Dental, and Employee & Family Assistance (EFAP) to UBC employees who have retired, or who have left UBC at age 55 or older. It's an optional program, but it may be particularly relevant to those who are approaching retirement age, and are curious about how their benefits may change once they retire.

I recently had a chat with Kat Maihara, RSB Administrator with the Benefits team. Kat is the main point of contact for staff who are interested in learning about continued benefits upon retirement or leaving the university. We talked a bit about the program, and went over some frequently asked questions. I hope you enjoy hearing from Kat, and learning about RSB.

Chelsey: Ok, I'd like to give a very warm welcome to Kat Maihara, RSB Administrator from the Benefits team at UBC HR. Kat, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast and helping Staff Pension Plan members learn about RSB!

Kat: That's fantastic, I'm happy to be here and thanks so much for having me!

Chelsey: So what exactly is the RSB Program?

Kat: Well, the Retirement & Survivor Benefit Program is an optional group benefit for former UBC faculty and staff who have retired or left UBC at age 55 or older. The RSB Program also provides benefits to eligible surviving families of UBC faculty and staff.

Chelsey: How many RSB members are there right now? Just to get a sense of the size of the program.

Kat: We have about 2200 members.

Chelsey: Ah ok! That's quite a lot of former employees. I'm sure that includes some SPP pensioners.

Ok so let's go through some questions that we hear sometimes from staff who come talk to us about pensions, but then might have inquiries about their other benefits in retirement. The first one is: If you transition from being a current employee with active member benefits, to a former employee with RSB benefits, when do those active member benefits cease, and when do the RSB benefits begin?

Kat: Ok this is a great question. So, when your active benefit coverage ends, at the end of the same month that you're retiring or leaving your employment with UBC, that's when the RSB plan can start the following day.

Chelsey: Ah ok, so there's no waiting period then?

Kat: That's right.

Chelsey: Is there an opportunity to backdate coverage? Like for example, if someone retired but didn't realize that RSB was available to them. Can they join after their retirement date?

Kat: Well, Sun Life doesn't allow any gaps in coverage. Therefore you have to be enrolled within 31 days of retirement/the end of your employment at UBC. The RSB coverage will start retroactive to the 1st of the month following your last day of your active benefit coverage end date.

Chelsey: What happens then after that 31-day period? Are they just no longer eligible to enroll after that point?

Kat: That's right. So what happens is, if you were to contact us on the 32nd day, you're no longer eligible to start up on the RSB plan.

Chelsey: Ok, timing is really essential here.

Kat: It is!

Chelsey: The next question is: When someone transitions from the active benefits plan to the RSB program, are they still allowed to submit receipts that were incurred during their time in the active benefits plan? Are they cut off from doing that when they've started RSB, or is there a grace period?

Kat: You can submit your unclaimed receipts for up to 90 days past your active benefit plan termination, using a paper claim form. You can always download the paper claim form from our HR website.

Chelsey: Ok excellent. So another question we've heard is: What are the advantages of joining RSB versus deciding to join retiree benefits plans from other institutions?

Kat: The active benefit plan and RSB are both administered by Sun Life. Sun Life already has your information from your active benefit plan, and Sun Life already has your benefit history. So it doesn't ask you for a health statement like other insurance companies or with a private plan. When considering coverage, we recommend that you consider the cost of the plan, access to benefit coverage offered by the plan, like comparing our plan to a private plan, examine your past experiences with medical and dental expenses, and then forecast your future medical and dental expenses. It's also good to speak with a financial advisor. And then you can check for competitive rates of coverage with other providers for private medical and dental plans.

Chelsey: I think that makes sense. It's definitely a good idea to do some cost comparisons and do some research on what insurer or coverage plan fits your individual needs, especially when transitioning into retirement. I can certainly see some advantages with the continuity that would be offered by staying with Sun Life through UBC. That ties into the next question: If I join RSB, will I receive a new benefits card with a different policy number?

Kat: You do. Because there's a different policy number, you will get a new card if you're enrolled in the extended health plan.

Chelsey: Another question we've heard is: I want to retire, but my spouse still has benefits coverage. Will I have an opportunity to join RSB later on?

Kat: Yes you do. If you retire from UBC and your spouse has comparable coverage, either by a spouse's or partner plan, you are eligible to enroll into the UBC program within 31 days of coverage under your spouse's plan end date.

Chelsey: Ok so if you have a spouse and you're covered under their plan, you can go all the way up until their plan coverage ceases?

Kat: That's right. It's a little complicated but it kind of works in a sense that, [if] you still have group coverage elsewhere, you can still come back within 31 days [of that plan's end date].

Chelsey: Ok that's good to know! Next question is: Can I join just one plan within RSB or do I have to join all three? To clarify, there are three plans within RSB - there's extended health, there's dental, and there's an EFAP, or Employee & Family Assistance Plan. So for example, can I just join the dental plan and not the other two?

Kat: Yes. So you have an option to tailor your plan coverage - you can enroll in extended health, dental, EFAP, one, or all. But you don't have an option to enroll at a later date. So you do have to have your enrolment done within the 31 days.

Chelsey: Are you allowed to customize within each area of coverage? For example, can you add certain aspects of medical coverage at an additional cost, based on your needs?

Kat: There is no customization within that plan. So, for dental, it's just dental. Same with extended health as well. It's whatever coverage the RSB plan has. So there's really no customization within those plans.

Chelsey: How about travel insurance? Is there an option for that, and if so, is there a maximum duration for each trip?

Kat: This plan does allow emergency out-of-province out-of-country medical care. And you'll be reimbursed 100% for out-of-province or out-of-country emergency doctors, hospital services, obtained within 90 days of the date that you leave your home province. So you are covered for 90 days at a time. The reimbursement is up to your remaining maximum lifetime balance. Plans have a maximum life balance and all your travel expenses (where you incur medical care) does fall within that maximum.

One of the things we get asked is [about] emergencies. An emergency is defined as an acute, unexpected condition of illness, disease or injuries that occur, that need immediate assistance.

Chelsey: What about deductible amounts? Does that change when you transition from the active benefit plan to RSB?

Kat: Yes. It depends on your employee group and what your deductible was for the active benefit plan, but this plan the annual deductible for extended health is \$1000. There is no deductible for dental.

Chelsey: Is a spouse included with that deductible?

Kat: It depends. For a single person, it's \$1000 deductible. For a family, it's \$1000 -- so you would work together with your spouse or dependent to actually reach that amount. So it's no more than \$1000.

Chelsey: Ok. Finally, if SPP members are starting to think about retirement and they'd like to learn more detail about what is covered within RSB, as part of their overall retirement planning, where should they go?

Kat: So they can visit the HR website at hr.ubc.ca for plan details, or contact the RSB office.

Chelsey: And generally, how do they go about enrolling? Can they just do it through Workday?

Kat: So normally you'll receive a benefit task in your Workday inbox. And then the task has to be completed within 31 days of your retirement or the end of your employment with UBC.

Chelsey: Will retirees still have access to Workday after their retirement date?

Kat: They do. It'll be limited access, so depending on the employee group, depending on the position that you left, the access will get narrowed down to receiving and being able to complete tasks through Workday.

Chelsey: So if staff have looked at the website and still have further questions for you, what's the best way for them to reach out?

Kat: Definitely contact our office. The RSB phone number is 604-822-4580 and I can be reached with my email address (kat.maihara@ubc.ca) or we have a Benefits inbox as well (benefitsinfo@hr.ubc.ca).

- hr.ubc.ca/benefits/benefit-plan-details/retirement-survivor-benefits
- hr.ubc.ca/contact/contact-benefits

Chelsey: That's great, we'll definitely include those email addresses and the RSB website in the transcript next to this audio episode.

So I think that covers all of the main aspects of RSB that I think many SPP members are curious about! I really enjoyed chatting with you and I appreciate that you are happy to educate members about another important facet of their retirement planning. Thank you!

Kat: You're very welcome. Thanks for having me!

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If you have questions about the UBC Staff Pension Plan or your personal situation, you can reach out to SPP Member Services at spp@hr.ubc.ca, or visit staff.pensions.ubc.ca/contact.