

Tips for finding an Individual Health Plan

Now More than Ever, Keep Your Health Coverage

This is a difficult time for everyone.

And for the thousands across Florida who have lost health coverage through their employer, there's added stress in the middle of this COVID-19 crisis.

If you lost health coverage through your job, chances are you can continue your same group coverage for at least 18 months. Depending on the size of your employer, this coverage is known as COBRA or mini COBRA. Your share of the monthly premium cost will likely be higher than what you paid before since the company will no longer contribute to that cost.

If you can't afford the COBRA coverage offered to you through your employer, **Affordable Care Act (ACA) plans (these are also known as Marketplace plans) may be a more affordable option**, and you may get help paying the cost of your monthly premium through a subsidy. In order not to lose health care coverage, you need to act quickly after losing your job.

Here are some tips that can help you make the best decision for you.

1 You have options.

Depending on your situation, covering the cost for COBRA coverage may be challenging. Losing your coverage through your job makes you eligible for a Special Enrollment Period and you can enroll in a Marketplace plan. Due to the change in your income, you may even qualify for financial assistance to help pay for your premium. Even if you already have another job, you may still want to explore these plans if your new employer doesn't offer health coverage.

2 Do your research.

Unlike coverage through your job, where you may only have had a couple of options, you have a lot of plans to choose from. **The Marketplace offers a wide selection of plans at various price points based on out-of-pocket costs and deductibles.** Based on your income, you may even have plans available to you for \$0 cost-share. Knowing what you can afford and need will help. Think about your past medical costs and how you used your coverage.

3 Shopping for a plan is different.

Several insurance companies offer individual ACA plans. First-time shoppers who are looking for an individual health plan should consider getting advice from a trusted agent. For those companies offering ACA plans, you can go to their website to learn more about their plans or find an agent to talk with for personal assistance.

It's important now more than ever to make sure you and your family are covered.

A short hospital stay can cost tens of thousands of dollars without health coverage.

Special tip:

You'll find all of your options in one place.

You can view all the companies and their products that are available in your area by visiting the Marketplace (healthcare.gov).

4

You may be able to get help paying for your health plan premium.

Many people aren't aware that, depending on your income, you may qualify for financial help through the Marketplace. Most people do. **Your cost-share could be as low as \$0 toward the plan's premium** and you also may pay less when you see a doctor.

5

You're not alone.

While you may not have your go-to benefits person from your job, there are licensed agents ready to help you. They can answer your questions, help you find the plan that makes the most sense for you and your family and help you enroll in the plan. Be aware that not all agents sell all plans, so it's a good idea to work with a company you know and trust.

6

Don't wait.

Losing your group coverage makes you eligible for a Special Enrollment Period to buy a plan on the Marketplace. But you only have 60 days from when you lost your job to buy a plan, or you'll need to wait until Open Enrollment, which starts in November for coverage that begins January 1, 2021.

7

Look at the plan benefits so you know what is covered.

Every plan is different, although there are certain benefits that all plans have to offer, like \$0 annual wellness visits, \$0 for preventive immunizations and vaccines and also certain generic contraceptives. Every plan will also have some type of coverage for prescription drugs, urgent care and ER visits, plus a specific list of doctors and hospitals included in that plan's network. Some insurers offer reduced-cost or \$0 office visits with select providers, so make sure to ask. **Don't forget to take advantage of any websites or materials sent to you to learn more about your plan.** Call your agent or your plan's customer service team if you have questions.

8

Check to see if your doctor accepts the plan.

It's a good idea to make sure any doctors, pharmacies and other facilities you use, such as hospitals or urgent care centers, participate in the network for the plan you are considering. **Be mindful, networks can be different for each plan, even if they are offered by the same company.** So make sure to choose the plan name as an option when searching for a specific provider.

9

Don't worry, you can get coverage even if you have a preexisting condition.

Even if you have a medical condition, you can still get a Marketplace plan. And more good news: It won't cost you more, and there aren't any coverage limitations either. In addition, many plans offer programs and extra support to help you better manage your conditions. Talk to your agent to find out what your plan offers.

10

You'll need to make an initial payment to start your coverage, and then pay each month.

It's important for you to make your first payment, because your health coverage will not start until your premium is paid in full. And like most other bills, you'll need to make your payment each month to keep your coverage in place. The good news is that most plans offer payment options. Setting up automatic payments using a debit or credit card will help to make sure you're always covered.

Your Special Enrollment Period only lasts 60 days.

If you miss it, your next opportunity to get Marketplace coverage will be in November, for coverage that starts on January 1, 2021.

Every plan is different.

Make sure any doctors, pharmacies and other facilities you use participate in the network for the plan you are considering.

The information in this document is provided courtesy of Florida Blue.