

Does your small business offer health insurance?

If so, make sure your health plan complies with Affordable Care Act rules that take effect this December.

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), businesses with fewer than 50 employees do not have to provide health insurance. However, those that do offer employer-based coverage will need to make sure their plans include the 10 ACA essential benefits or enroll in an ACA compliant plan by December 1, 2015 to ensure your coverage meets the terms of the law on January 1, 2016.

Have you received a notice saying your health insurance would be canceled because your plan no longer complies with the ACA?

If so, don't panic. These notices are being sent because your policy doesn't include the essential health benefits required by the ACA. Any plan you purchase for 2016 will include those benefits, as well as the certainty that you cannot be turned down for coverage because of pre-existing conditions. In searching for an ACA compliant plan, you may find your health coverage options have also expanded under the ACA and your business may be eligible for new programs or tax credits, or your employees may be eligible for subsidies.

How do I know if I have an ACA compliant plan?

Find out if you are in an ACA compliant health plan by contacting your broker or a Covered California certified insurance broker. You can also check your current coverage to see if it includes the 10 essential health benefits called for by the ACA.

Will it cost more to have a health insurance plan that is ACA compliant?

The cost of offering health insurance depends on several choices the employer will make. The best thing to do is to call your insurance broker or contact a Covered California certified insurance agent to discuss all your options.

What happens if I don't renew in an ACA compliant plan?

The ACA does not require businesses with 50 or fewer eligible employees to offer health care coverage. However, it is the law that all lawfully present U.S. residents have health insurance or pay a penalty. Starting in 2016, the penalty for not having health care coverage is a minimum of \$695 per adult, or 2.5% of your income, whichever is higher.

Can employers pay the premiums for employees who get individual coverage?

No, small business owners cannot directly reimburse or pay the premiums for employees who get individual health plans. Employers that do can be fined \$100 per day, per employee by the IRS. Over the course of a year that can add up to \$36,500 per employee, up to \$500,000 in total.

When is the deadline for getting an ACA compliant plan?

Any plan that is not ACA compliant will expire on December 31, 2015. To ensure you have health coverage beginning January 1, 2016, you must be enrolled in an ACA compliant plan by December 1, 2015.

ACA Compliant Health Plans: What do they include and where can you get them?

The 10 essential benefits included in ACA compliant plans are:

1. **Ambulatory Patient Services:** Care you receive without being admitted to a hospital – for example, at a clinic, physician’s office or same-day surgery center.
2. **Emergency Services:** Care for conditions which, if not immediately treated, could lead to serious disability or death.
3. **Hospitalization:** Care you receive as a patient in a hospital, such as room and board, care from doctors and nurses, and tests and drugs administered during your stay.
4. **Maternity and Newborn Care:** Care provided to women during pregnancy and during and after labor; care for newly born children.
5. **Mental Health And Substance Use Disorder Services, Including Behavioral Health Treatment:** Care to evaluate, diagnose and treat mental health and substance abuse issues.
6. **Prescription Drugs:** Drugs prescribed by a doctor to treat an acute illness, like an infection, or an ongoing condition, like high blood pressure.
7. **Rehabilitative And Habilitative Services And Devices:** Services and devices to help people with injuries, disabilities or chronic conditions gain or recover mental and physical skills.
8. **Laboratory services:** Testing blood, tissues, etc. from a patient to help a doctor diagnose a medical condition and monitor the effectiveness of treatment.
9. **Preventive And Wellness Services And Chronic Disease Management:** Preventive and wellness services include routine physicals, screening, and immunizations. Chronic disease management is an integrated approach to manage an ongoing condition, like asthma or diabetes.
10. **Pediatric Services, Including Oral And Vision Care:** Basically, the other nine essential benefits, but in treatments designed for kids.

How do I find out more about my health insurance options? There are options for you and your employees as a business, and there are options for you and your employees as individuals, those include:

1. Covered California for Small Business is a health insurance marketplace available to businesses with 50 or fewer employees. The plans offered through Covered California for Small Business provide small business owners and their employees with options similar to those available in the private market. Covered California for Small Business also offers tax subsidies to small businesses that meet certain qualifications. Find more information at www.coveredca.com/small-business/.
2. Covered California is the state’s health insurance marketplace where individuals and families can shop for health plans from a number of insurance companies. Covered California offers subsidies to those who meet certain requirements that are based on income and family size. Find more information at www.coveredca.com/individuals-and-families/.
3. Medi-Cal provides health care coverage to low income adults, families, seniors, persons with disabilities, children in foster care and pregnant women. Find more information at www.coveredca.com/medi-cal/.
4. The private marketplace offers flexible options for business and individuals. Find a certified insurance broker who can help find a plan that’s best for you at www.cahu.org/consumers/.

Still confused? Have more questions? The best thing to do to ensure you are complying with the health law is to contact a certified insurance agent. Find one near you at www.cahu.org/consumers/.