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Insurance Department Provides Guidance to Consumers on Newly Extended Special Enrollment Period and Insurance Provisions of the American Rescue Plan

CONCORD, NH – The Open Enrollment Period on the Health Insurance Marketplace (Healthcare.gov) was extended again yesterday until August 15. In addition, the American Rescue Plan (ARP), signed into law by President Biden in March, improves affordability for thousands of New Hampshire consumers purchasing plans through Healthcare.gov. Starting on April 1, consumers may revisit their application to see if they qualify for increased savings (known as premium tax credits) by updating their application until the August 15 deadline. There are several ways the ARP helps consumers, however enrollees are advised to re-process their applications with caution. Selecting a different plan or adding a family member during the Special Enrollment Period may cause a deductible re-set.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 22,900 uninsured New Hampshire residents are newly eligible for premium tax credits under the law and 1,000 uninsured residents are now eligible for \$0 silver benchmark plans. In addition, many people who already have health plans purchased through Healthcare.gov will qualify for enhanced premium tax credit amounts and reduced out of pocket costs. Premium assistance will also increase for individuals above 400% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), because the law has decreased the percentage of household income that must be contributed toward a health plan.

All consumers who currently have a plan through Healthcare.gov are strongly encouraged to visit the website and reprocess their application. For many, this will generate the increased premium tax credit amounts that can be allocated toward the plan cost.

Consumers may change plans or add a family member during the Special Enrollment Period – however, they should consider the new plan’s deductible and how much they have already spent toward their current plan’s deductible. If someone selects a different plan—even with the same company—their deductible and out-of-pocket maximum amounts may re-set for the remainder of the year. Their deductible could start over and any out-of-pocket costs already spent in 2021 will not count toward the new plan. Consumers should call their insurance company before changing plans or adding a new household member to learn if the deductible re-set issue will affect them.

“Extending the Special Enrollment period is consistent with what state officials and Governor Sununu have been requesting for over a year, so this announcement is good news,” said Deputy Commissioner D.J. Bettencourt. “While the SEP is a great opportunity for consumers and premiums are the lowest they have been in quite some time, Granite Staters need to keep their deductibles in mind. While the Insurance Department has been in discussions with insurance providers about waiving the deductible reset for those changing plans, no decisions have been made by insurers.”

Premium savings will be applied retroactively to those months in 2021 prior to reprocessing the application and will be repaid when consumers reconcile their 2021 taxes. If no action is taken during

the extended Special Enrollment Period, consumers will receive their premium savings as a 2021 tax refund.

Temporary COBRA premium subsidies are included in the ARP for up to 6 months during 2021. These subsidies will cover 100% of the monthly premium cost for people who are eligible. The law requires the employer to pay for the premium for those who are eligible and the government will reimburse the employer for this cost. The subsidies can be paid for coverage months no earlier than April 1 and no later than September 30. Consumers should reach out to their COBRA plan administrator for additional information.

The ARP also extends affordability to those receiving unemployment benefits. If someone receives unemployment compensation, they should apply and select a plan by the end of March for the coverage to begin on April 1. After April 1, consumers with unemployment compensation can revisit their application to receive additional financial subsidies. Beginning in early July, these individuals who were determined eligible for unemployment for any week during 2021 may be able to get an additional increase in savings when enrolling in a plan or reprocessing their application. More information on these benefits will be released in the future.

Consumers seeking assistance with the enrollment process can get free help from an insurance agent, federal Navigator, or enrollment assister using the [Find Local Help tool](#) on Healthcare.gov or by contacting NH Navigator by calling 1-877-211-NAVI or by visiting their [website](#).

The New Hampshire Insurance Department Can Help

The New Hampshire Insurance Department's mission is to promote and protect the public good by ensuring the existence of a safe and competitive insurance marketplace through the development and enforcement of the insurance laws of the State of New Hampshire. Contact us with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your insurance coverage at 1-800- 852-3416 or (603) 271-2261, or by email at consumerservices@ins.nh.gov. For more information, visit www.nh.gov/insurance.

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