

HEALTH CARE LAW OFFERS NEW INSURANCE OPTIONS FOR SMALL EMPLOYERS

Trying to find health insurance for your employees?

Check out the Small Business Health Options Program—SHOP—part of the new Health Insurance Marketplace. The SHOP Marketplace gives you a choice of quality, private health insurance plans, and information and tools to help you compare them and choose the one that works best for your company and your employees.

In many states, you can enroll in SHOP coverage directly through an agent, broker or a health insurance company that offers a SHOP Qualified Health Plan—much the way many small employers get insurance today.

When you buy coverage through the SHOP Marketplace, you may also qualify for a tax credit worth up to 50 percent of your contributions to employee premium costs (up to 35 percent for tax-exempt employers.) Small employers have already received more than \$1 billion in tax credits since this tax credit was created in 2010.

Detailed information on the SHOP Marketplace is available at HealthCare.gov.

The new health law and small employers

You're not required to offer health insurance under the health care law if you have fewer than 50 employees, nor is there any penalty if you don't.

But you can buy insurance through the SHOP Marketplace if you have 50 or fewer full-time employees, and you offer insurance to all full-time employees (generally those working 30 or more hours a week.)

Every plan in the SHOP Marketplace covers a comprehensive set of benefits, including doctor visits, hospital stays, preventive care, and prescriptions.

And new rules require these plans to treat you fairly; insurance companies can't raise premiums for the group just because of an employee's preexisting health condition or because an employee gets sick or injured, and there are new limits on charging small groups higher premiums for older employees.

How to buy coverage through the SHOP

For 2014, in most states, you'll enroll in SHOP coverage directly with an agent, broker or insurance company that offers a SHOP Qualified Health Plan. However, states that are running their own SHOP Marketplaces will have their own enrollment processes. HealthCare.gov can direct you to the correct website for your state.

An agent, broker or insurer can help you find and compare SHOP health plans, give you exact prices and help your employees enroll when you're ready. They can also help you fill out and send in a paper application for SHOP eligibility to the SHOP Marketplace.

You can also find plan information, a Premium Estimation Tool and download an application for SHOP eligibility on HealthCare.gov.

You don't need to wait to hear back from the SHOP Marketplace about your eligibility before enrolling. But if you want to apply for the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit, you will need to get a notice of your SHOP eligibility before you file your returns for tax year 2014.

If your employees enroll in the SHOP plan you select by December 23, your coverage can take effect on January 1. But you can enroll at any time throughout the year for coverage that takes effect later.

If you have questions about what the SHOP Marketplace offers or how to apply, visit HealthCare.gov or call the SHOP Employer Call Center toll-free at 1-800-706-7893. TTY users should call 711 to access the SHOP Employer Call Center. Tell the customer service representative if you need help in a language other than English.