U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Health Care and the Affordable Care Act

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Affordable Care Act?

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law, was created to expand access to affordable health care coverage to all Americans, lower costs, and improve quality and care coordination. Under the health care law, people will have:

- health coverage that meets a minimum standard (called "minimum essential coverage") by January 1, 2014;
- qualify for an exemption; or
- make a payment when filing their taxes if they have affordable options but remain uninsured.

In 2014, Health Insurance Marketplaces will be a new way to find health coverage. On the Marketplaces, some people may be eligible for lower costs on health premiums and out-of-pocket costs based on their income.

At a glance

- VA wants all Veterans to get health care that improves their health and well-being.
- If you are enrolled in VA health care, you don't need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards.
- The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs.
- If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time.

What happens if I do not have health coverage?

You do not have to make a payment if you have coverage that meets a minimum standard (called "minimum essential coverage"). If you have access to affordable coverage but remain uninsured starting in 2014, you may have to make payment when filing your taxes. This payment will either be a flat fee or a percentage of your taxable household income, depending on which amount is higher. This payment will be phased-in according to the schedule below:

- $95 or 1% of your taxable income in 2014
- $325 or 2% of your taxable income in 2015
- $695 or 2.5% of your taxable income in 2016

Exemptions from the payment will be granted under certain circumstances. For more information on these exemptions, visit www.healthcare.gov.

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If I'm enrolled in a VA health care program, do I meet the requirement for health care coverage?
Yes. If you are enrolled in any of VA's programs below, you have coverage under the standards of the health care law:
- Veteran's health care program
- Civilian Health and Medical program (CHAMPVA)
- Spina bifida health care program

What are the benefits of enrollment in VA health care?
Enrollment in VA health care means you have:
- Medical care rated among the best in the U.S.
- Immediate benefits of health care coverage. Veterans may apply for VA health care enrollment at any time.
- No enrollment fee, monthly premiums, or deductibles. Most Veterans have no out-of-pocket costs. Some Veterans may have to pay small copayments for health care or prescription drugs.
- More than 1,400 places available to get your care. This means your coverage can go with you if you travel or move.
- Met the new requirement to have health care coverage that meets the minimum standard.

How do I enroll for VA health care coverage?
You may apply in one of three convenient ways. To enroll, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit your local VA health care facility.

Can I continue to use VA health care with other programs, like private insurance or federal health care programs?
Yes. You can continue to use VA for all your health care needs, or complement your VA care with private health insurance or coverage by other federal health care programs, including Medicare, Medicaid, and TRICARE.

What's the Health Insurance Marketplace?
Beginning in 2014, the Marketplace is a new way to shop for and purchase private health insurance (for example, health coverage other than VA health care programs) that fits your budget and meets your needs. People who purchase insurance through the Marketplace may be able to lower the costs of health insurance coverage by paying lower monthly premiums.

I am enrolled in a VA health care program. Would I be eligible for assistance to pay health insurance premiums on the Marketplace if I choose to purchase health care outside of VA?
Since VA care meets the standard for health care coverage, you wouldn't be eligible for assistance to lower your cost of health insurance premiums if you chose to purchase additional health care coverage outside of VA. However, you may still purchase private health insurance on or off the Marketplace to complement your VA health care coverage.

How will I know if I'm eligible for assistance to purchase health insurance outside of VA?
VA can't make this determination. If you use the Marketplace, you will find out if you can get lower costs on your monthly premiums for private health insurance plans. Remember, if you are a veteran enrolled in (or are a beneficiary of) a VA health care program, you don't need to take additional steps to meet the health coverage requirements under the health care law.

Are my family members (who aren't eligible for VA or other federal health care programs) eligible for assistance to purchase health insurance?
Your family members who are not enrolled in a VA health care program may use the Marketplace to get coverage. They may get lower costs on monthly premiums or out-of-pocket costs. They could be eligible for free or low-cost coverage through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Starting October 1, they can submit an application for health care coverage through the Marketplace, and learn the amount of assistance they are eligible for. For more information, visit www.healthcare.gov.

Can I cancel my VA health care coverage?
Yes. However, acceptance for future VA health care coverage will be based on eligibility factors at the time of application, which may result in a denial of health care coverage.

Where can I get more information?
For information on VA health care and the Affordable Care Act, visit VA's website at www.va.gov/aca, or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., eastern. For information on the Marketplace, visit www.healthcare.gov.

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