

Affordable Care Act **Fact Sheet**

The 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) was enacted into law to help ensure that all Americans have access to affordable, quality healthcare. When the ACA was passed into law, it contained a permanent reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) which helps fund the Indian Health Service* (IHS) and provides for expanded IHS services. The ACA also expanded Medicaid coverage (see our Medicaid factsheet) to ensure that low-income Americans have adequate access to healthcare. The ACA has made it easier for some American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/ANs) to qualify for Medicaid. **For AI/ANs, the ACA offers opportunities to get health insurance coverage and have more healthcare choices than may have previously been available. The ACA contains specific provisions designed to encourage AI/AN consumers to acquire health coverage.** (1)(2)

HOW IT WORKS

The ACA has led to the creation of a national insurance marketplace (also known as an exchange) and various state or federally run marketplaces. These insurance marketplaces offer healthcare plans through private insurance companies for a monthly premium which is paid whether or not the healthcare service is used. **Individuals may qualify for “premium tax credits” based on income to help pay for their monthly insurance costs.** (3)

The plans come in **four different levels** (*bronze, silver, gold, and platinum*) which determine how much of a service the insurance company will pay. Bronze plans often have *the lowest monthly premiums (costs)*, but the insurance company will only pay for 60% of the costs of services when the insurance is used. A platinum plan will generally have *the highest monthly premiums*, but the insurance company will pay 90% of the cost of services*. Visit www.healthcare.gov/choose-a-plan/plans-categories/, to learn more about what plans pay for. (3)



Based on income, **AI/ANs may qualify for zero cost sharing or limited cost sharing plans, where no copayments, coinsurance, or deductibles (out-of-pocket expenses) will have to be paid** to use the insurance some of these plans may require the use of Indian healthcare providers or a referral from Indian healthcare providers. *Deductibles/copays may apply in some cases.* (4)

OPEN ENROLLMENT/HELP CENTERS

Members of a federally-recognized tribe or Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) shareholders **can enroll in marketplace coverage at any time and are not subject to open enrollment periods.** AI/ANs in either of these categories may also change their plan on a month-to-month basis. Free help is available online at <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov>.

Enrollment Counselors can help you enroll in a plan and understand the process, and are available over the phone or in person at no cost. Agents or brokers can help recommend a plan that is the best fit for your needs, and their services are also free to you. (4)

WHAT IF ...

... I have insurance through my employer, Medicare, Medicaid, VA Benefits, CHIP or TRICARE? For those Elders who have insurance through an employer, coverage through the healthcare marketplace is not required unless the employer's plan does not meet certain requirements. For Elders with any of the other forms of health coverage, **marketplace coverage is not required and no action is required.** (5)

...I am receiving or am I eligible to receive my healthcare from the IHS? Many are aware that the ACA created a requirement that all citizens have health insurance (called the "individual mandate") which went into effect in

2015 for the 2014 tax year. Those who do not carry insurance may now be subject to cash penalties assessed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) called an "individual responsibility payment." A special exemption is available to AI/ANs who are eligible to receive IHS services. **Elders must apply for this exemption (see www.healthcare.gov for the exemption application form),** carry qualified insurance through an employer as stated above, or purchase a marketplace plan to avoid the individual responsibility payment assessed by the IRS. (6)(5)

HOW TO GET COVERED

Applying for marketplace coverage will: determine your eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP coverage and tax credits to reduce the cost of health insurance. To get started and directed to the appropriate marketplace for your state of residence, **call 1-800-318-2596** (24/7, closed major federal holidays) or go to www.healthcare.gov/get-coverage/.

**The Indian Health Service (IHS), an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services, is responsible for providing federal health services to American Indians and Alaska Natives.*

SOURCES

- 1). Indian Health Service, <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/index.cfm/pressreleases/2010pressreleasesindianhealthcareimprovementactmadepermanent/>
- 2). Indian Health Service, www.ihs.gov/aca/
- 3). Healthcare.gov., <https://www.healthcare.gov/choose-a-plan/plans-categories/>
- 4). Healthcare.gov., <https://www.healthcare.gov/american-indians-alaska-natives/>
- 5). Indian Health Service, www.ihs.gov/aca/index.cfm/thingstoknow/
- 6). IRS, www.irs.gov/Affordable-Care-Act/The-Individual-Shared-Responsibility-Payment-An-Overview