

Last chance to enroll in obamacare for 2015

February 12 2015, by Karen Pallarito, Healthday Reporter



Sign up or switch plans by Feb. 15 to avoid penalties.

(HealthDay)—Americans eligible for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) are facing an important deadline. This year's sign-up period ends Sunday, Feb. 15.

For most people, it will be the last chance to select an ACA marketplace [health plan](#) or switch plans for 2015. That's why health advocates are urging uninsured Americans to take advantage of this final window of opportunity.

The 2015 open enrollment period kicked off on Nov. 15, 2014, with barely a hiccup compared with the online problems that dogged sign-ups for 2014, the inaugural year of the new insurance marketplaces, or exchanges.

The ACA, or Obamacare, requires most citizens and U.S. nationals to have [health insurance](#) coverage or pay a fine. Some people may qualify

for exemptions due to religious beliefs, financial hardship or other extenuating circumstances.

If you are enrolled in a qualified health plan for 2015, you are considered covered under the law. The list of qualified plans includes Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, job-based health insurance, military or veterans' [health coverage](#) and health insurance purchased on or off the Affordable Care Act marketplaces.

Penalties for not having health insurance in 2015 jump to 2 percent of household income or \$325 per adult (and \$162.50 per child)—whichever is higher.

Close to 10 million people have already signed up for marketplace coverage for 2015, [federal health officials](#) reported earlier this month. That figure includes some 7.5 million who selected a health plan or re-enrolled in coverage through HealthCare.gov, the federal enrollment website serving people in 37 states. Others have secured coverage through state-operated health insurance exchanges.

Although the Congressional Budget Office had previously projected 13 million enrollees in 2015, federal health officials last November revised projected enrollment to between 9 million and 10 million for the year.

The ACA was designed to expand affordable coverage to people who cannot afford health insurance on their own. It does that, in part, by subsidizing insurance premiums for people of modest means.

If you make up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level (as much as \$95,400 for a family of four), you may qualify for federal tax credits to defray your monthly health insurance premium. People with very low incomes will pay little or nothing for coverage.

The amount of the subsidy depends on your household income and the number of people in your household.

Many low-income people may qualify for reduced out-of-pocket costs as well.

Americans who choose a health plan before this year's cutoff date could have coverage as soon as March 1. After Feb. 15, the federal and state ACA marketplaces will only enroll people in health coverage for 2015 under special circumstances, such as a birth, death or move.

There's no deadline for enrolling in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Programs.

The next ACA open enrollment period begins Oct. 1, 2015, for [coverage](#) that would kick in no earlier than Jan. 1, 2016.

For those hoping to squeak in under the wire for 2015, HealthCare.gov can tell you whether you live in a state with a state- or federally operated health marketplace. You can also find local experts to help you enroll.

Consumers can call the government's 24/7 hotline at 1-800-318-2596 for assistance.

More information: For answers and help getting started with insurance coverage, visit [HealthCare.gov](#).

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