



Frequently Asked Questions: Uncertainty in the ACA Marketplaces 11.21.2017

This FAQ is meant to be a guide for enrollment assisters as they field questions from consumers during the 2018 enrollment period. We know that news cycles filled with ACA repeal headlines and the recent action to end the cost-sharing reduction payments have and will continue to cause confusion for consumers about their 2018 coverage.

Q: Is the Affordable Care Act, also known as “Obamacare,” ending?

A: No! Despite what you might hear on the news, the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) is not ending. At this time, there have been no changes to the law.

Q: Do I still need to buy health insurance?

A: Yes. Just as in years past, if you fail to maintain health insurance coverage for the year, you will be subject to a financial penalty when you file your taxes unless you qualify for an exemption. There have been no changes to this rule.

Q: Will my plan stay the same next year?

A: Maybe. Each year insurance companies make business decisions about where to offer their plans. In some cases, an insurance company selling a plan in your county one year might not offer that same plan the next year. On the other hand, a new plan might be available to you that was not available last year. This is why it's important to return to the marketplace during open enrollment each year to shop around for a plan that best meet your needs.

Q: Will I still get financial assistance next year?

A: Yes, as long as your income remains the same. Unless your expected income for 2018 is greater than it has been in previous years when you qualified for financial assistance, the programs that offer assistance for premiums and other out-of-pocket costs still exists.

Q: What is a cost sharing reduction (CSR)?

A: A CSR is a subsidy – paid directly to the health insurer - to reimburse them for providing you with a plan with lower out-of-pocket costs, such as deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance.

Q: Who is eligible for a CSR?

If you enroll in a silver plan in the health insurance marketplace and your income is between 100 and 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, you are eligible for a CSR.



Q: How are CSRs paid?

A: Insurance companies are required by law to provide eligible consumers a version of plans with reduced cost-sharing charges. They then receive reimbursements from the federal government for the costs of these reduced cost-sharing charges.

Q: What does the president's announcement about financial assistance mean for me and my coverage?

A: You may have heard of President Trump's earlier announcement that the administration will stop reimbursing insurance companies for plans with cost-sharing reductions (CSR). However, this does not affect you. If your household income is between 100 to 250 percent of the federal poverty level and you qualify for marketplace coverage, health insurers on the marketplace must still offer you plans with reduced out-of-pocket costs like deductibles, co-pays, and coinsurance by law. While health plans may lose their reimbursement for that extra coverage from the federal government, they are still required to provide the plans.

This decision also does not affect your Advanced Premium Tax Credits; if your income is below 400 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and you otherwise qualify, you should still continue receiving a subsidy to help lower your premium costs.

Q: Is my health insurance premium going up?

A: Health insurance premiums fluctuate from year-to-year for a variety of reasons. The good news is that as premiums rise, subsidies to pay for those premiums also rise for the 85 percent of people who buy insurance through the ACA marketplaces and qualify for subsidies. So many people will see little change in their own costs.

In fact, this year's plans on [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) are cheaper than ever before for those eligible for financial assistance. 4.5 million consumers can sign up for health insurance for a premium of zero dollars per month. Roughly 8 in 10 enrollees qualify for financial assistance to help lower the cost of their insurance.