

WHEN CAN YOU SIGN UP FOR THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT? - - -

For individuals who are purchasing health insurance coverage for themselves and/or their families, it is extremely important to know when you are able to purchase and change your health insurance plans. Due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), there are **strict enrollment periods**.

NOVEMBER 1, 2016- JANUARY 31, 2017- OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD FOR 2017 – If you want coverage to be effective on January 1st, you would need to enroll by December 15th.

Remember, the ACA plans are all calendar year plans, January through December. Each year, hopefully by early October, you should receive information from the health insurance provider regarding your new premiums and plan designs. Unfortunately we have seen some big increases and changes in the plan structures over the past couple of years. Once you review this information, if you are happy with the new plan and price, please call and notify me, and it should automatically renew. However, if you are interested in making a change, you would need to do this during the open enrollment period. If not, your plan may automatically renew to the new plan design.

SPECIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD- This is the time that is outside of open enrollment when someone can enroll in a plan or change to a different plan. In order to do this, you need to have a qualifying event, and now, the carriers require proof of the event. You have to enroll within 60 days of the qualifying event. The main events include:

Loss of employer based coverage (Dropping individual coverage or nonpayment of individual coverage DOES NOT constitute as a qualifying event)

- Loss of Medicaid eligibility
- Marriage
- Birth/Adoption

- Gaining eligible immigration status
- Permanent move to another residence in area outside of coverage plan
- Losing a dependent through death or divorce
- Change in income status

Unfortunately, things are different than they were previously. In the past, if you wanted to apply for coverage, you could do so at any time. A few of my clients learned the hard way that this is no longer the case. If, for example, you miss paying your premiums, the insurance will be cancelled, and after a certain period of time (I believe it is 60 days maximum), they will not reinstate you, and you won't be able to get an ACA plan until open enrollment. In this situation, some people can qualify for a short term plan, which is medically underwritten, but does not meet the ACA guidelines.

WHAT IS COBRA? - - -

COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act) – This act requires employers to offer continuation of health insurance coverage to employees and their dependents when employees are terminated, laid off, etc. This applies to employer groups with 20 or more employees and usually can continue for 18 months. If an employee elects the cobra coverage for himself and/or his family, he would be required to pay the full cost as the employer would no longer be contributing to the premium.

An important thing to keep in mind is that, if an individual leaves a place of employment and has group employer coverage ending, he would be eligible to sign up for an ACA plan during the SEP period. Individuals facing cobra face an important choice. If he elects COBRA, he would no longer have that right since the cobra coverage was his election during the qualified event. This is important to understand especially if employers are offering packages to pay for cobra for employees for a few months. In this case, if the employee takes the coverage, they would be able to enroll in an ACA

plan only during open enrollment or once their cobra ends, which is approximately 18 months. If you are in this situation, it is best to compare rates and plan designs prior to electing the cobra.

WHAT IS FINAL EXPENSE INSURANCE? - - -

This is basically a life insurance for seniors. It is a simplified issue whole life product that provides funds for loved ones with expenses such as funeral costs and outstanding medical bills. Thinking about final expenses is usually not easy for any of us. It can be a difficult task that many people would rather not think about.

According to the National Funeral Directors Association, Member General Price List Study in 2013, a traditional adult funeral, including a casket and vault, carries a median cost of \$8,343, and the additional expense of flowers, limousines, and obituary notices can add thousands of dollars to the total cost. Many funerals can run well over \$10,000. Securing final expense insurance is not difficult. You can apply for a simplified issue plan, which requires that you complete a basic medical questionnaire and meet specific qualifications. Please let me know if you need any information on this type of insurance.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS - - -RSVPS are required---

I will be hosting 2 workshops in the fall of this year.

The first will be focusing on **Medicare**. Elaine Cole, who is the Public Affairs Specialist for the Social Security Administration, will be discussing Medicare Parts A and B, how to enroll, late enrollment penalties, income related monthly adjustments, and more. It will be held in the conference room at the Icomplex at Southpointe on **Friday September 16th from 100 pm until 300pm**. This will be an informative session, with time for questions and answers. Due to limited space, you must call or email our office to make a reservation in advance. (Phone- 724-260-0341, Extension 102/ Email- mfairbanks@bluepeakinsurance.com)

The second will be focusing on the **Affordable Care Act (ACA)**. I will be presenting updated information on the ACA process- enrolling via Federal Marketplace or direct with insurance carriers, the different types of subsidies available, projected plan changes and rate changes. It will be held in the conference room at the Icomplex at Southpointe on **Tuesday, October 11th at 1:00pm**. Again, space will be limited due to room constraints. You must call or email our office to make a reservation in advance. (Phone- 724-260-0341, Extension 102/ Email - mfairbanks@bluepeakinsurance.com)

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www.bluepeakinsurance.com



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