



Know the Facts

The Affordable Care Act Is Working in North Carolina

December 10, 2014

With a new open enrollment period upon us, here are the facts about how health care reform is working in North Carolina. The insurance marketplace is here to stay, and people will continue to have access to quality plans and financial assistance through the Affordable Care Act, or ACA. As more and more people obtain coverage through the ACA, they will gain a better understanding of what the law means for them. A recent Gallup poll found that the majority of Americans who purchased new health insurance policies through the ACA marketplace over the past year are as satisfied as other Americans with their health insurance: 71 percent rated their coverage “excellent” or “good,” compared with 72 percent among all those who have coverage.¹

Last year, more than 390,000 North Carolinians obtained health insurance thanks to the ACA.² Among those, an overwhelming majority qualified for financial assistance to help cover the cost of care.³ Whether you are thinking of signing up for health insurance or have already purchased coverage on the marketplace, shopping around during this year’s open enrollment period could mean big savings.

North Carolina by the numbers

Who has benefited

- **357,584 North Carolinians signed up for health care through the federal exchange.** During last year’s open enrollment period, 357,584 people—more than 60 percent of all eligible North Carolinians—signed up for health insurance on the federal exchange.⁴
- **More than 9 in 10 North Carolinians qualified for tax credits that, on average, made plans 79 percent cheaper.** Ninety-one percent of North Carolinians who signed up for a plan received tax credits to make their insurance more affordable. Tax credits lowered the cost of the average plan from \$381 to \$81, a 79 percent decrease.⁵

The deadlines to sign up are approaching

To re-enroll in different coverage or enroll in new coverage beginning January 1, the deadline to sign up is **December 15, 2014.**

The final deadline to sign up for health coverage in 2015 is **February 15, 2015.**

- **36,044 North Carolinians signed up for health care through Medicaid.** During the same open enrollment period, 36,044 people signed up for health insurance through Medicaid, even though North Carolina did not expand the program.⁶
- **North Carolina's uninsured rate fell by 3.7 percentage points after open enrollment.** From 2013 to mid-2014, North Carolina's uninsured rate decreased from 20.4 percent to 16.7 percent.⁷

Who can still benefit

- **In North Carolina, 16.7 percent of residents are still uninsured.** Despite the success of the ACA in allowing thousands of North Carolinians to sign up for health coverage, 16.7 percent of the state still lacks insurance.⁸
- **Financial assistance is available, and you could pay as little as \$129 per month for coverage.** A 40-year-old nonsmoker who earns \$30,000 annually in North Carolina can find a bronze plan that costs \$129 per month once tax credits are factored in and a silver plan that costs \$208 per month.⁹
- **357,000 North Carolinians could benefit from Medicaid expansion if North Carolina lawmakers put people over politics.** Because Gov. Pat McCrory (R) and other Republican lawmakers refused to accept Medicaid expansion under the ACA, 357,000 North Carolinians fall into North Carolina's "coverage gap," meaning their incomes are higher than the \$8,860-per-year limit—for a family of three in 2014—to qualify for traditional Medicaid but too low to qualify for insurance subsidies on the exchange.¹⁰
- **North Carolina turned down \$1.7 billion in economic growth by refusing to expand Medicaid.** If North Carolina had accepted federal funding to expand Medicaid in 2014, the state would have seen its economy grow by \$1.7 billion over two years.¹¹

Have insurance? Shopping around could save you money

- **The number of insurers participating in North Carolina's exchanges increased from two to three, increasing competition and lowering rates.** An additional insurer joined North Carolina's federal exchange for this year's open enrollment period, bringing the total number to three insurers.¹² These insurers offer 1.5 times as many plans on the exchange as last year.¹³
- **Choosing lower-cost premium plans could result in savings of \$2 billion.** If everyone nationwide who previously signed up in the marketplace switched to the lowest-cost premium plan in the same metal tier—silver, for example—their combined actions would create \$2 billion in savings for consumers and taxpayers.¹⁴

Need help?

Go to www.HealthCare.gov to start the application process.

If you need assistance, you can get free, in-person help from an expert in your community to guide you through the process. Go to localhelp.healthcare.gov to find assistance near you.

You can sign up over the phone by calling 1.800.318.2596.

- **Sixty percent of North Carolinians eligible for tax credits could benefit from a premium decrease.** In North Carolina, 60 percent of people eligible for tax credits on the exchange can purchase a silver plan that costs less than it did last year.¹⁵

Endnotes

- 1 Frank Newport, "Newly Insured Through Exchanges Give Coverage Good Marks," Gallup, November 14, 2014, available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/179396/newly-insured-exchanges-give-coverage-good-marks.aspx>.
- 2 Kaiser Family Foundation, "State Marketplace Statistics," available at <http://kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/state-marketplace-statistics/> (last accessed November 2014); Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Medicaid & CHIP: April 2014 Monthly Applications, Eligibility Determinations, and Enrollment Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014), available at <http://www.medicaid.gov/affordablecareact/medicaid-moving-forward-2014/downloads/april-2014-enrollment-report.pdf>.
- 3 Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *Premium Affordability, Competition, and Choice in the Health Insurance Marketplace, 2014* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014), p. 23, available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2014/Premiums/2014MktPlacePremBrf.pdf#page=23>.
- 4 Kaiser Family Foundation, "State Marketplace Statistics."
- 5 Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *Premium Affordability, Competition, and Choice in the Health Insurance Marketplace*.
- 6 Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, *Medicaid & CHIP: April 2014 Monthly Applications, Eligibility Determinations, and Enrollment Report*.
- 7 Dan Witters, "Arkansas, Kentucky Report Sharpest Drops in Uninsured Rate," Gallup, August 5, 2014, available at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/174290/arkansas-kentucky-report-sharpest-drops-uninsured-rate.aspx>.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Cynthia Cox and others, "Analysis of 2015 Premium Changes in the Affordable Care Act's Health Insurance Marketplaces" (Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2014), available at <http://kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/analysis-of-2015-premium-changes-in-the-affordable-care-acts-health-insurance-marketplaces/>.
- 10 Rachel Garfield and others, "The Coverage Gap: Uninsured Poor Adults in States that Do Not Expand Medicaid – An Update" (Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2014), available at <http://kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/the-coverage-gap-uninsured-poor-adults-in-states-that-do-not-expand-medicaid-an-update/>; Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, "Medicaid Eligibility for Adults as of January 1, 2014" (Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2013), available at <http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/8497-medicaid-eligibility-for-adults-as-of-january-1-2014.pdf>.
- 11 Families USA, "Medicaid Expansion in North Carolina: Health Insurance for Working Individuals and Families" (2014), available at http://familiesusa.org/sites/default/files/product_documents/MCD_North%20Carolina%20Medicaid%20gap%20and%20employment_final_web.pdf.
- 12 Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *Health Plan Choice and Premiums in the 2015 Health Insurance Marketplace* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014), p. 14, available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2015/premiumReport/healthPremium2015.pdf>.
- 13 McKinsey Center for U.S. Health System Reform, "2015 Individual Exchange information, last updated November 19, 2014," p. 39, available at http://healthcare.mckinsey.com/sites/default/files/McKinsey_2015_individual_rate_filings.pdf#page=39 (last accessed November 2014).
- 14 Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, *Health Plan Choice and Premiums in the 2015 Health Insurance Marketplace*, p. 2.
- 15 Ibid.