

News Column for Use Week of 3/29/2021
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River Valley Extension District
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Health Insurance Options

You may be eligible to enroll in health insurance through the Marketplace (www.healthcare.gov) due to a special enrollment period and the recently passed American Rescue Plan Act.

The Marketplace was created with the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010. Informally known as Obamacare, the Marketplace offers health insurance options to individuals and families within a certain income level that do not have any other offer of health insurance.

To be eligible for health insurance through the Marketplace, you must live in the U.S., be a U.S. citizen or national (be lawfully present), and cannot be incarcerated. To receive financial assistance with your Marketplace health insurance, you cannot have affordable job-offered insurance or Medicare. Marketplace health insurance cost is based on household income.

Typically, individuals and families can select health insurance during open enrollment in the fall but due to the pandemic, a special enrollment period was opened this spring and has just recently been extended through August 15th, 2021. Coverage is effective the first day of the following month.

In addition to the special enrollment period, the recently passed American Rescue Plan Act included many modifications to the Marketplace. The premium tax credits have increased for both 2021 and 2022, which means lower premiums for individuals and families. The income eligibility has raised, which means more individuals and families are eligible, so if your household income was previously too high, the Marketplace now may be an option. There are additional special provisions for individuals that have or will be receiving unemployment benefits in 2021.

If you had a Marketplace plan in 2020 and owe back any premium tax credit, the American Rescue Plan Act also has given repayment forgiveness. The IRS has not issued yet how this will be handled so if you have already filed your taxes, please wait for more information to be released.

Whether you currently have Marketplace insurance or are needing to research health insurance options, free, local help is available. Monica Thayer, Family Resource Management Extension Agent for the River Valley District, is a certified application counselor for the Marketplace and is available to assist with researching options, applying, and selecting health insurance.

Contact Monica at 785-527-5084 or mthayer@ksu.edu to schedule an appointment today. She will be scheduling appointments in Belleville, Clay Center, Concordia, and Washington. All individuals must wear face coverings. You may also opt to do an appointment via Zoom.