

Health Insurance for Individuals & the Self Employed

Across the United States there is an epidemic. It is not a disease epidemic, although it could lead to one, but an epidemic of the lack of health insurance among millions of Americans. Almost sixteen percent of the American people are currently without health insurance, which adds up to about 47 million people! Many of these people simply cannot afford health insurance while others do not have access to health insurance or health benefits through their employers either because such benefits are not offered or they are self employed.

Most of the self employed individuals out there cannot qualify for public programs such as Medicaid or Medicare, usually because they simply make too much money. It's a strange dichotomy in the United States that millions of people make too much money to qualify for medical assistance yet they cannot afford to purchase health insurance on their own. Health insurance for individuals is a little more difficult to come by than such health policies offered through employers, which is also part of the challenge.

It is important to understand that individual states regulate the health insurance market, which has a direct effect on who can purchase coverage, what type of coverage will be included in each policy, and how much it costs. It is essential that any individual in the market for health insurance also know that this state regulation of health insurance is characterized by medical underwriting in which each insurance company decides who to sell coverage to and what is included in that coverage based on the health status, prior medical history, gender, age, and other criteria of each applicant. For example, individuals with diabetes are denied individual health insurance plans in most states. Medical underwriting, although illegal in some states, has made it quite difficult for individuals to obtain health insurance.

Health insurance for individuals, though sometimes hard to obtain, is possible and worth it, especially in today's world of rising healthcare costs. Individual health insurance policies can be fee-for-service, HMO, or PPO coverage. Regardless of the type of protection, it is always in your best interest to get a guaranteed renewable policy, also called non-cancellable health insurance. This means that as long as you continue paying your premiums, your individual health coverage will continue without cancellation. The company can cancel all policies like yours or even raise the price but they cannot cancel your policy only.

In many cases, individual health insurance plans will not offer as wide a spectrum as group benefits, but it is important to compare the policies of several different companies before choosing one. When shopping around for health insurance as an individual, you should shop very carefully. All companies differ in premiums, deductibles, and coverage, so be sure to examine the fine print before signing up. It is also important for you to make sure that the individual health insurance policy you are considering will protect you from large medical costs.