

## The American Rescue Plan and Lower Health Insurance Costs - 12 Things to Know

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 lowers costs for many individuals and families who buy health insurance through health insurance marketplaces. Vermonters can learn about the new lower costs in our state's marketplace by visiting <http://VermontHealthConnect.gov>, calling the [Customer Support Center](#), or contacting trained, local professionals to help them through the [Assister program](#).

Here are 12 things to know:

**1) Don't assume your income is too high to get help.**

Income eligibility thresholds are much higher now. People in single plans with incomes up to \$94,500 and those in family plans with incomes up to \$265,000 may qualify for financial help. Did you or someone in your household get unemployment in 2021? You may get the most help, no matter how much you make.

**2) There's a lot more financial help now.**

Don't assume health insurance is too expensive just because you looked in the past. Individuals with income up to \$38,000 per year and couples with income up to nearly \$60,000 may qualify for plans with **\$0 monthly premiums**. Is your income higher? Want to see your costs? Visit the [Plan Comparison Tool](#).

**3) The law gives extra benefits to people who were eligible for unemployment compensation in 2021.**

Was someone in your household eligible for regular Unemployment Compensation or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation? Extended Unemployment Compensation or Pandemic Unemployment Assistance? You may qualify for an Enhanced Silver 94 plan. These plans have the lowest out-of-pocket costs. See the [Unemployment Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) for more information.

**4) Vermonters who previously weren't eligible for financial help could see their monthly bills cut in half.**

Before the American Rescue Plan Act, a Vermonter earning \$55,000 didn't qualify for financial help. The lowest-cost plan would have cost them \$491 per month. Now they can get this same plan for \$211 – less than half as much!

**5) You can only get financial help if you sign up through Vermont Health Connect.**

Do you buy insurance directly from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont? Or from MVP Health Care? You must transfer your plan to Vermont Health Connect to be eligible for tax credits. Have you made a payment toward your deductible? It will still count as long as you choose a plan with the same insurance company. You can transfer any time. The sooner you do it, the bigger your tax credit.

**6) You usually cannot get financial help if you are eligible for another type of health insurance.**

To qualify for financial help, you cannot have an offer of affordable insurance, such as Medicare, Medicaid, or job-sponsored insurance. Does your employer offer health insurance but it doesn't seem affordable? See Vermont Health Connect's [Affordability Estimator](#). If it meets the federal definition of "unaffordable," you may qualify for financial help.

**7) There are multiple ways to use the new financial help.**

You can use the tax credit to make your monthly bills lower. OR you can use part on your monthly bill and get the rest on your tax return. OR you can save all of it for a tax credit on your tax return. You must tell Vermont Health Connect how much of the new tax credit you want to apply as a discount on your monthly bill.

*This is a sample article from the Department of Vermont Health Access's Communications Toolkit for the American Rescue Plan, released July 7, 2021. Find more Vermont Health Connect educational materials at <https://info.healthconnect.vermont.gov/find-local-help/educational-materials>*

8) **Vermont is now a competitive place to buy health insurance – even for young people.**

Nationally, the average 27-year-old with a \$55,000 income will pay \$248 for the lowest cost plan – they'll pay 15% less in Vermont (\$211).

9) **Marketplace members can change plans.**

You can keep the plan you have **or** change plans. If you want to change plans, you must pick a new one by August 15, 2021. If you stay with the same insurance company, they still count any deductibles you paid. If you change insurance companies, the deductibles you already paid won't count.

10) **Changing plans could help members lower their total costs even more.**

With the new financial help, some people can get lower premiums AND lower out-of-pocket costs when they change plan designs or metal levels. Want to learn more? Visit the [Plan Comparison Tool](#).

11) **It's important to read your postal mail – this summer more than ever.**

Do you buy a health plan directly from an insurance company? They recently mailed you a letter explaining how to see how much money the law could save you. It told you how to transfer your plan to the marketplace.

Did you get unemployment compensation at any point this year? The Vermont Department of Labor will contact you about the new health insurance benefit.

Did you choose a health plan that doesn't take full advantage of your financial help? Vermont Health Connect will contact you.

If you suspect fraud, you don't have to respond directly. Call the published numbers of your insurance company, Vermont Health Connect, or the Health Care Advocate to confirm what you should do. They will help you get the new financial help.

12) **Your neighbors need you to help spread the word: if health insurance was too expensive in the past, it's a great time to look again.**

Vermont has one of the highest rates in the country for having health insurance. We accomplished this through our strong sense of community. Vermonters look out for their families, neighbors, co-workers, and fellow community members. If you share the message about the new financial help, we can give even more Vermonters the opportunity to attain health and well-being without worrying as much about the cost of health insurance.

**Whether you get insurance through the marketplace, are enrolled directly with an insurance company, or don't currently have insurance, find your next steps in the [American Rescue Plan Act FAQ](#) at <http://VermontHealthConnect.gov>. Or call 1-855-899-9600.**

**About Vermont's health insurance marketplace, Vermont Health Connect:**

The Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA), within the State of Vermont's Agency of Human Services, is responsible for administering Vermont's marketplace for health insurance. To learn more, visit the [DVHA website](#) or [Vermont Health Connect website](#).

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