**Bulletin Insert or Announcement**

***Covered California’s New Special Enrollment Period Runs February – May 15, 2021***

On the heels of the recent announcement by President Joe Biden to strengthen the Affordable Care Act, Covered California has established a special-enrollment period beginning in February through May 15 to give uninsured Californians more opportunities to sign up for health care coverage, as the country continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession.

The move comes after the president established a national special-enrollment period from Feb. 15 to May 15 for the 36 states served by the federally facilitated marketplace and after announcing his commitment to launching a marketing campaign to promote enrollment.

Similar to the steps Covered California took last year, the new special-enrollment period will allow uninsured individuals to sign up for coverage without needing to meet the normal qualifying life events, such as recent loss of coverage or moving. Anyone who meets Covered California’s eligibility requirements, which are similar to those in place during the annual open-enrollment period, can sign up for coverage through May 15 and have their coverage begin on the first of the following month.

The executive order issued by President Biden will strengthen the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid so they can continue to provide access to live-saving care. The order directs federal agencies to reconsider policies that limit access, undermine protections for people with pre-existing conditions – including complications related to COVID-19 – make it more difficult to enroll or reduce affordability. You can view the administration’s fact sheet [here](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.whitehouse.gov%2Fbriefing-room%2Fstatements-releases%2F2021%2F01%2F28%2Ffact-sheet-president-biden-to-sign-executive-orders-strengthening-americans-access-to-quality-affordable-health-care%2F&data=04%7C01%7CAngie.Blanchette%40covered.ca.gov%7C49863c00b3c54d35399e08d8c48045b8%7C466d2f7db1424b9c8cddeba5537a0f27%7C0%7C0%7C637475402486664307%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=w3ac63HJ3%2BhjoCK0p06JKIUOLNEjl5ZU5N2nXQDLQyg%3D&reserved=0).

In California, an estimated 1.2 million uninsured people are either eligible for financial help through Covered California, or they qualify for low-cost or no-cost coverage through Medi-Cal.  The state subsidies are only available to eligible consumers through Covered California, and about 9 out of 10 consumers qualify for some type of financial help. The amount of financial help consumers receive will vary depending on their age, their annual household income and the cost of health care in their region.

As a reminder, the state individual mandate penalty also returns for 2021 if you can afford health coverage and are uninsured. The penalty is administered by California’s Franchise Tax Board and could be as much as $750 for an adult, half that amount for children, and up to $2,250 for a family of four.

Those interested in applying for health coverage can explore their options, and find out whether they are eligible for financial help, in just a few minutes by using the [Shop and Compare Tool](https://apply.coveredca.com/lw-shopandcompare/) at CoveredCA.com. All they need to do is enter their ZIP code, household income and the ages of those who need coverage to find out which plans are available in their area.

Consumerinterested in learning more about their coverage options can:  
-Visit [www.CoveredCA.com](http://www.coveredca.com/).  
-Get [free and confidential assistance](https://www.coveredca.com/support/contact-us/), in a variety of languages, from a certified enroller.  
-Have a certified enroller [call them](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcoveredca.helpondemand.com%2Flp%2Fa8c3085e-e597-4ac8-ba23-42f245fdfa11&data=04%7C01%7CAngie.Blanchette%40covered.ca.gov%7C67e06cfb63cb4ba5835d08d88d955fd9%7C466d2f7db1424b9c8cddeba5537a0f27%7C0%7C0%7C637415019994454807%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=uOr347xrFssZsfB1q%2BncUHzMH%2FKDBZEgxgyrV2x5CDU%3D&reserved=0) and help them for free.  
-Call Covered California at (800) 300-1506.