

COVID-19 and the Uninsured

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In 2020, Marketplace Enrollment Down

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On April 2nd, the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a national report that details enrollment in the Affordable Care Act Health Insurance Marketplace during the most recent open enrollment period (Nov. 1, 2019 – Dec. 15, 2019 and the late exchange activity, Dec 16, 2019 – Dec. 21, 2019). For the 2020 plan year, 262,919 people in Michigan enrolled in a private insurance plan through the Marketplace.¹ This figure marks a reduction in the number of enrollees from 2019, during which 274,058 Michiganders selected a plan.² As of the most recently available data, in 2018, 5.4 percent of Michiganders, or 534,551 people, were uninsured.³ The number of uninsured was likely higher in 2019 and is almost certainly higher now.

In Michigan, the largest reduction in enrollees from 2019 to 2020 was in silver-tier Marketplace plans.⁴ In 2019, 141,243 Michiganders enrolled in a silver-tier plan through the Marketplace.⁵ In 2020 that number was 122,631.⁶ Concurrent with that drop in enrollment, there was an uptick in bronze plan enrollment in Michigan this year, going from 116,929 enrollees in 2019 to 124,624 in 2020.⁷ Review CHRT's detailed [Rate Analysis: Michigan's 2020 Health Insurance Marketplace](#) for a more information about the Michigan Marketplace during the 2020 open enrollment period.

The Health Insurance Marketplace and the COVID-19 Crisis

As of April 10, 2020, 12 of the 13 states with state-based marketplaces—state-developed websites that allow residents to select subsidized ACA plans, bypassing the federally facilitated Healthcare.gov marketplace—decided to reopen their marketplaces to allow uninsured residents to purchase health insurance outside of the annual, six-week open enrollment period.⁸

Thirty-two states, including Michigan, use the federally facilitated Healthcare.gov marketplace and another six states have a hybrid system of state-based marketplaces that operate on the Healthcare.gov federal platform.⁹ All 38 of these states need approval from the federal government in order to initiate a new open enrollment period.¹⁰

To date, the Trump Administration has not agreed to allow for a new open enrollment period for states that use the federally-facilitated Healthcare.gov exchange, and has instead committed funds from the CARES Act to cover the costs of the uninsured and who have medical bills associated with COVID-19.¹¹ On April 13th, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer, along with 11 other governors whose states use the federally facilitated exchange, wrote a letter to the federal government urging them to initiate a new open enrollment period.¹²

Editor's note:

Individuals who lose their jobs, but do not already have health insurance, can not participate in a special enrollment period.



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Editor's note: COBRA is a more expensive insurance plan that can be used for up to 18 months by people who experience a change in employment status.

The Affordable Care Act does allow for a special enrollment period for individuals who lose health insurance as a result of a job loss.¹³ Michiganders who lose health insurance following a job loss have 60 days to apply for health insurance coverage on the healthcare.gov marketplace.¹⁴ The special enrollment period only applies to those with life event changes such as losing a job. It would not apply to those who were already uninsured.¹⁵

There are also other options for coverage for those recently unemployed such as COBRA¹⁶, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.^{17,18} Michigan residents can contact the Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) at 877-999-6442 or via email at DIFS-HICAP@michigan.gov for more information or if they need assistance enrolling on the exchanges.¹⁹

Endnotes

¹ "2020 Marketplace Open Enrollment Period Public Use Files." CMS.gov. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, April 2, 2020. <https://www.cms.gov/index.php/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Marketplace-Products/2020-Marketplace-Open-Enrollment-Period-Public-Use-Files>.

² "2019 Marketplace Open Enrollment Period Public Use Files." CMS.gov. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service, 2019. https://www.cms.gov/index.php/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Marketplace-Products/2019_Open_Enrollment.

³ Berchick, Edward R., Jessica C. Barnett, and Rachel D. Upton. "Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2018." census.gov. The United States Census Bureau, November 8, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2019/demo/p60-267.html>.

⁴ Insurance plans in the Marketplace are divided into four primary categories: bronze, silver, gold, and platinum. Each "metal" category provides a different level of cost-sharing with bronze having the lowest monthly premiums but highest out-of-pocket cost to platinum plans having the highest monthly premiums but lowest out-of-pocket costs.

⁵ 2019 Marketplace Open Enrollment Period Public Use Files." CMS.gov. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service, 2019. https://www.cms.gov/index.php/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Marketplace-Products/2019_Open_Enrollment.

⁶ "2020 Marketplace Open Enrollment Period Public Use Files." CMS.gov. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, April 2, 2020. <https://www.cms.gov/index.php/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Marketplace-Products/2020-Marketplace-Open-Enrollment-Period-Public-Use-Files>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Sanger-Katz, Margot, and Reed Abelson. "Eleven States Now Letting Uninsured Sign Up for Obamacare." The New York Times. The New York Times, April 6, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/upshot/coronavirus-obamacare-marketplaces-reopen.html>.

⁹ "State Health Insurance Marketplace Types, 2020." The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, November 4, 2019. [https://www.kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/state-health-insurance-marketplace-types/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel={\"collId\":\"Location\",\"sort\":\"asc\"}#](https://www.kff.org/health-reform/state-indicator/state-health-insurance-marketplace-types/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel={\).

¹⁰ Sanger-Katz, Margot, and Reed Abelson. "Eleven States Now Letting Uninsured Sign Up for Obamacare." The New York Times. The New York Times, April 6, 2020.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/upshot/coronavirus-obamacare-marketplaces-reopen.html>.

¹¹ Lotven, Amy. "Admin Again Rejects SEP, To Reimburse Uninsured With \$100B Hospital Fund." Admin Again Rejects SEP, To Reimburse Uninsured With \$100B Hospital Fund | InsideHealthPolicy.com. InsideHealthPolicy, April 3, 2020. <https://insidehealthpolicy.com/daily-news/admin-again-rejects-sep-reimburse-uninsured-100b-hospital-fund>.

¹² Durr, Matt. "Gov. Whitmer Partners with 11 States to Ask for Special National Open Enrollment Period for Health Insurance." mlive, April 13, 2020. <https://www.mlive.com/public-interest/2020/04/gov-whitmer-partners-with-11-states-to-ask-for-special-national-open-enrollment-period-for-health-insurance.html>.

¹³ It should be noted that Special Enrollment Periods occur as a result of a loss of coverage and not solely due to loss of employment. In other words, individuals who lose their jobs but did not already have health insurance will not be able to participate in a Special Enrollment Period.

¹⁴ "Coronavirus - Healthcare Coverage Available to Michiganders who Lose Job or Experience a Drop in Income." DIFS, April 7, 2020. <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98158-524638--00.html>.

¹⁵ Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2018, United States Census Bureau, November 2018: <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2019/demo/p60-267.html>



¹⁶ COBRA is a higher cost health insurance program that can be utilized for up to 18 months by people who recently had a change in their employment status.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Luthi, Susanah. "Trump Rejects Obamacare Special Enrollment Period amid Pandemic." POLITICO. March 31, 2020. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/31/trump-obamacare-coronavirus-157788>.

¹⁹ "Coronavirus - Healthcare Coverage Available to Michiganders who Lose Job or Experience a Drop in Income." DIFS, April 7, 2020. <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98158-524638--00.html>.