Health Insurance Options When You're Out Of School

Below is a breakdown of some common options for coverage to get you started on enrolling in health insurance.

Your Parent’s Plan

The new health reform law ensures that you can stay on your parent’s insurance until you turn 26. Have your parents ask their employer or insurer about the process for re-enrolling and about the plan’s “dependent coverage” policy. Some states require coverage of young adults past the age of 26 in certain cases. Check out the “How To Join Your Parent’s Insurance Plan” flyer for more details. Often times, your parent’s plan will be the best option.

Your Employer’s Plan

If you are working while in school, ask if your job comes with health insurance. Your eligibility may depend on how many hours you work. If you are eligible for your employer’s insurance plan, make sure you read the fine print and watch out for these important elements:

» If your job offers a health plan, you may not be able to stay on your parent’s plan.

» Many jobs will force you to wait a month or two before you can join their health insurance plan. Make sure you’re covered in the meantime. (Starting in 2014, the health care law prohibits employers from making workers wait any longer than 90 days for their coverage to start.)

» Talk to your hiring supervisor or human resources department about the benefits offered.

» Losing your employer coverage, whether it’s because you became too old for your parent’s employer plan or lost your job, you may be able to stay on that plan for 18 - 36 months, depending on what happened. For more information on this option, called COBRA, go to www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/cobraemployee.pdf.

Graduating High School? Enroll in A Student Health Insurance Plan

Some schools offer a student plan, some require that you enroll, and some offer no plan at all. If you have the option of enrolling in a plan through your school, consider the costs and benefits of enrolling in the school’s plan.

» Read the rules about benefits, preventive care, co-pays, deductibles, and prescription drug coverage for the plan carefully, and compare the plan with any other options you may have (like a parent’s plan).

» Check to see if some campus health services are included in a student health fee even if you don’t enroll in the campus health insurance plan.

» If you are enrolled in a non-school plan, verify that you have coverage at campus medical facilities.

Buying Your Own Plan

If you can’t get coverage through your job, your parent’s job, or your school, you may need to buy a health plan on your own. A great place to start looking is Healthcare.gov. It can tell you about the prices and benefits for plans in the state where you live. You can also search for plans through an insurance broker or on websites like ehealthinsurance.com. In 2014, all states will have online “exchanges” through which to buy coverage. A few things to look for:

www.YoungInvincibles.org/GettingCovered
Read the fine print! Some plans (plans with high deductibles) may only cover you if something catastrophic happens, and some may not cover your condition or medication.

If you have a pre-existing condition, you may have a tough time finding insurance that accepts you. That practice is outlawed under the new health care law starting in 2014 (and is outlawed now for people under the age of 19).

Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan

If you have a pre-existing condition, you may be able to join a Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan, an option provided through the new health care law.

Go to www.pcip.gov to find a plan. You must meet the following requirements:

- Be a U.S. citizen;
- Have been uninsured for at least 6 months; and
- Have been diagnosed with a health condition or have had a problem getting insurance due to a pre-existing condition.

Your state may have other coverage options for people with pre-existing conditions. Talk to your state’s insurance department to see what’s available.

Medicaid and Other State Insurance Plans

If you can’t afford to buy insurance on your own, you may be eligible for free or low-cost insurance through your state, particularly if you are a parent or are pregnant. For example, in North Carolina, a young adult with one child earning less than $617.81 per month can qualify for Medicaid coverage. Pregnant women earning less than $2,332.54 per month can generally qualify as well.

Even if you do not have a child or are not pregnant, you should still check to see if you qualify, as a few states provide coverage to adults without dependent children. Some states also allow families who make too much to qualify for Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to purchase coverage through these programs by paying a small premium. In addition, your state may have other coverage programs that you may qualify for.

If you aren’t sure whether or not you are eligible, it is best to apply rather than trying to guess, because the income rules for these programs can be complicated. Go to http://1.usa.gov/Av2SO1 to learn the nitty-gritty details about North Carolina-specific requirements and programs.

Local Clinics, Community Health Centers, and Hospitals

If you can’t afford insurance, your school may offer some basic services at no charge through the student health center. There may also be clinics, community health centers or hospitals in your area that provide free or low-cost care. These facilities can serve as a backstop until you can afford full coverage. Check with your school’s student health department to see what they offer, or visit http://find-dahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Search_HCC.aspx to see what local clinics are in your community.

Have questions? Email us at Questions@YoungInvincibles.org

www.YoungInvincibles.org/GettingCovered