

Should I drop my Medicare Advantage plan and buy a health insurance plan in the Marketplace?

No. If you have Medicare, you should not buy health insurance plans through the Health Insurance Marketplace. This is true, whether you get your Medicare benefits through Original Medicare, the traditional Medicare program directly administered by the federal government, or through a Medicare Advantage plan, which is Medicare coverage offered through a private insurance company.

Health insurance Marketplaces, also known as Health Insurance Exchanges, were created under the Affordable Care Act (Sometimes called “Obamacare”) as a way for people who are uninsured or underinsured to compare and purchase health insurance plans. Keep in mind that Marketplaces may have different names, depending on which state you live in. For example, the California Marketplace is called Covered California, while the New York Marketplace is called the New York State of Health.

Again, the important thing to know is that people who have Medicare should generally not drop their Medicare coverage and sign up for a Marketplace plan. If you have Medicare, your Medicare benefits will not change as a result of the Marketplaces. In addition, insurance agents and brokers are not allowed to sell you Marketplace health insurance plans if they know you have Medicare.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the Marketplace is not a way for you to get Medicare coverage. You cannot buy Medicare coverage, such as Original Medicare or Medicare Advantage plans, in the Market place. Medigap plans, also know as supplemental insurance plans that helps pay Original Medicare costs, will not be sold through the Marketplace. Similarly, Medicare prescription drug plans, also known as Medicare Part D plans, will not be sold through the Marketplace.

Lastly, keep in mind that there are some consequences that may occur if you drop your Medicare coverage and somehow mistakenly sign up for a health insurance plan in the Marketplace. If you drop your Medicare coverage, you will most likely have to pay a premium penalty if you enroll in Medicare again in the future. In addition, you will likely have to wait until a specific enrollment period to sign up for Medicare and may therefore experience gaps in health coverage.

Remember, it’s best to speak to a Social Security Administration agent anytime you decide to drop your Medicare coverage. You can contact Social Security by calling 800-772-1213 or by going to your local Social Security office. Be sure to record the time and date of your conversation, the name of the Social Security agent you speak to and the outcome of your conversation.

For information about your Medicare benefits, contact 800-MEDICARE or go online and visit www.medicare.gov .

The Medicare Rights Center recently released its first-ever report outlining the top concerns facing people with Medicare. The report, *Medicare Trends and Recommendations: An Analysis of 2012 Call Data from the Medicare Rights Center’s National Helpline*, features an analysis o f the thousands of compelling stories heard on the Medicare Rights Center’s National Helpline in 2012.

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