

# CONSIDERATIONS WHEN A CONSUMER IS CHOOSING BETWEEN COBRA & WASHINGTON HEALTHPLANFINDER COVERAGE



**GET COVERED. REMAIN COVERED.**

## COBRA Background

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives workers and their families the opportunity for continuation coverage when job-based insurance is ending. This continuity of coverage can be helpful for individuals who want to keep their current doctors and health-care providers, particularly those in active treatment or who have already met their deductible for the year.

The former employer may help contribute towards the monthly cost to enroll in COBRA continuation coverage. COBRA continuation coverage may also be available if the former employer does not contribute towards the cost, but this can be thousands of dollars a month. Customers should contact their employer's human resources department or COBRA administrator for details about any available COBRA options.

The recently passed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provides full COBRA premium assistance for the period of April 1 through September 30, 2021. During this period, the full cost of the premium is paid by the federal government. When this temporary COBRA premium assistance runs out, consumers can qualify for a special enrollment period to enroll in coverage through *Washington Healthplanfinder*.

## How does COBRA coverage compare to *Washington Healthplanfinder* coverage?

Workers and families who lose employer coverage may face a choice between getting coverage through COBRA or *Washington Healthplanfinder*.

Losing job-based insurance qualifies those impacted for a special enrollment period – they have up to 60 days before or after the day their employer coverage ends to enroll in a health plan through *Washington Healthplanfinder*. This coverage is not limited in duration (like COBRA can be) and the federal premium and cost-sharing subsidies and Washington Apple Health coverage available through *Washington Healthplanfinder* often result in lower-cost options.

The recently passed American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provides even more federal premium and cost-sharing assistance for *Washington Healthplanfinder* customers, particularly those receiving unemployment income benefits in 2021. Anyone receiving or approved to receive unemployment income benefits for any week during 2021 will get the maximum premium assistance available for all of 2021, and additional cost-sharing assistance for all of 2021. These benefits may make coverage through *Washington Healthplanfinder* more affordable than COBRA, even throughout April through September when COBRA premium assistance is available. In addition, for all of 2021 and 2022, qualifying customers will receive extra savings that significantly reduce premiums, making *Washington Healthplanfinder* a more affordable option for most customers when their COBRA premium assistance runs out.

## Additional Considerations

For consumers that are comparing COBRA continuation coverage to Qualified Health Plan coverage, decision support tools such as Smart Planfinder and side-by-side comparison are available in *Washington Healthplanfinder* to assist. Below are some of the considerations for a consumer when choosing between COBRA and *Washington Healthplanfinder* coverage. If the consumer has detailed questions about COBRA or Qualified Health Plan benefits or would like a plan recommendation, an assister should refer them to either their employer's Human Resource's Department, COBRA plan administrator, or a licensed insurance producer.

	<b>Washington Healthplanfinder Qualified Health Plan</b>	<b>COBRA Continuation Coverage</b>
<b>Monthly costs</b>	Premium subsidies available to enroll at no cost, or up to 8.5% of monthly income for a Silver-level plan, depending upon an enrollee's income.  Enhanced premium assistance under ARPA ends December 31, 2022.	Employer may contribute towards monthly premium costs.  COBRA premium assistance under ARPA runs from April 1 ends September 30, 2021.
<b>Costs when receiving care</b>	Subsidies are available to help pay for out-of-pocket costs.  Additional cost-sharing assistance during 2021 for those receiving or approved for at least 1 week of unemployment benefits in 2021.	Consumer may have incurred out of pocket costs. They may or may not have already met their employer health plan deductible for 2021.
<b>Receiving active treatment</b>	Use Smart Planfinder to see if certain providers or medications are covered.	COBRA Continuation coverage extends their current health coverage. Individuals can continue ongoing care.
<b>Timing</b>	Can enroll during open enrollment (Nov. 1 - January 15, annually) and can also enroll mid-year via a special enrollment period:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can enroll up to 60-days before or after your employer coverage end date</li> <li>• Can enroll anytime while in COBRA (if eligible for subsidies)</li> <li>• Can enroll up to 60-days after COBRA ends or when the employer stops helping pay for coverage</li> </ul>	Up to 18 or 36 months from the month someone's hours are reduced or they are terminated from employment.
<b>Benefits</b>	All Qualified Health Plans are comprehensive coverage.	Same benefits as the employer's health plan
<b>Coverage Network</b>	Use Smart Planfinder to see if certain providers or medications are covered.	Same providers as the employer health plan.

#### Additional Resources

- Learn more about COBRA and Marketplace coverage following loss of a job at [COBRA Coverage and Health Insurance Marketplace® Options | HealthCare.gov](#), or you may contact the United States Department of Labor (DOL), the agency that administers COBRA. The toll-free telephone number for DOL is (866) 444-EBSA (3272)
- Learn more about COBRA and the American Rescue Plan Act to see COBRA Premium Subsidy information on the [Employee Benefits Security Administration website](#)
- Learn more general information about the American Rescue Plan Act from the Washington Health Benefit Exchange [FAQs](#).

## Find In-Person Help

# WAPlanfinder

COVERAGE INFO ON THE GO

USE OUR MOBILE APP TO FIND IN-PERSON HELP NEARBY



[wahealthplanfinder.org](http://wahealthplanfinder.org)

1-855-WAFINDER

1-855-923-4633



click. compare. covered.