

What Employers Need to Know About MassHealth Premium Assistance Programs

The MassHealth Premium Assistance program helps working individuals and families pay for employer-sponsored health insurance coverage. MassHealth members with access to qualifying employer-sponsored insurance (ESI) may be eligible to enroll in Premium Assistance. The Premium Assistance program helps to pay for an employee's share of the monthly health insurance premiums deducted from their paycheck by their employer. Premium assistance reimbursements are provided directly to the employee. MassHealth may also assist with other out-of-pocket costs such as copayments, deductibles, and coinsurance.

- Certain MassHealth members with access to ESI are required to enroll in and maintain available ESI, as long as certain rules are met:
 - The health insurance coverage must meet certain requirements, called the Basic Benefit Level, as defined in 130 CMR 501.001.
 - Certain MassHealth coverage types require that the employer contribute at least 50% toward the total cost of the ESI plan in order for the plan to qualify for Premium Assistance.
 - The deductible and out-of-pocket expenses must be within limits allowed under the program.
 - MassHealth must determine it is cost-effective for the member to enroll.
 - MassHealth must determine that the member is eligible for the Premium Assistance program.
- Members who are determined eligible for Premium Assistance may enroll in ESI without regard to any enrollment periods or other restrictions that apply to late enrollees for any group plan, as the eligibility determination is considered a qualifying event.
- MassHealth members may apply for Premium Assistance at any time.
- Once the eligible employee enrolls in ESI, the Premium Assistance program must receive proof of enrollment, such as a copy of the enrollment/election form, before the employee can be reimbursed for premiums.
- The Premium Assistance program conducts annual eligibility determinations in conjunction with the employer's open enrollment period to review updated plan information for all members.
- MassHealth members are required to report to MassHealth changes that may affect eligibility within 10 days of the change, including changes to the availability of ESI (see 130 CMR 501.010(B)).

Employer Information Required by MassHealth for Premium Assistance and ESI Enrollment

MassHealth members with access to ESI who may be eligible for Premium Assistance will receive a letter from MassHealth informing them that they must apply for Premium Assistance and enroll in ESI, if eligible.

- In some instances, employees may present a Premium Assistance application to the employer for the employer to complete. The employer must provide information about their ESI in order for MassHealth to determine if the ESI qualifies and if the employee is eligible for the program. It is important for employers to provide this information to MassHealth as soon as possible. Eligible employees are required to enroll in and maintain the qualifying ESI.

Health Insurance Responsibility Disclosure (HIRD)

The HIRD form is a state reporting requirement in Massachusetts, which launched in 2018. The HIRD form collects employer-level information about the employer's ESI offerings, in order to assist MassHealth in identifying members with access to qualifying ESI who may be eligible for Premium Assistance. In most instances, the HIRD form will eliminate the need for employers to complete a separate Premium Assistance application for their employees.

The HIRD reporting is administered by MassHealth and the Department of Revenue (DOR) through the MassTaxConnect (MTC) web portal. State law requires every employer in Massachusetts with six or more employees to annually submit a HIRD form.

To complete the HIRD form:

1. Log into **MassTaxConnect (MTC)**
2. Scroll down to the **Withholding Tax** section on the Summary page
3. Select the **File a health insurance responsibility disclosure** hyperlink

The HIRD form must be completed electronically and paper forms or any substitution of the form will not be accepted. The HIRD form will be available to be filed starting November 15 of the filing year, and must be completed by December 15 of the filing year on an annual basis.

For more information about HIRD reporting, please review the HIRD FAQs on the mass.gov website: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/health-insurance-responsibility-disclosure-hird-faqs>.

For more information about the Premium Assistance program, visit the MassHealth Premium Assistance web page: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/other-health-insurance-and-masshealth-premium-assistance>.