

Obamacare Update and Deadlines

By Maureen E. Carr, Esq.

Since my March 2013 article entitled “Obamacare and You: How to Ensure Your Business Complies,” there have been a number of noteworthy developments in the Obamacare landscape:

- The effective date of the “employer mandate,” which requires all employers with 50 or more full-time or “full-time equivalent” employees to offer healthcare plans to full-time employees or pay a tax penalty, has been delayed from January 1, 2014 to January 1, 2015. This delay has no effect on the “individual mandate,” which requires nearly all U.S. residents to have health coverage or pay a tax penalty, which still goes into effect on January 1, 2014.
- At the end of October, the Obama Administration announced a six-week delay of the deadline for individuals to apply for health coverage and not face a tax penalty, from February 14, 2014 to March 31, 2014. Although the “individual mandate” technically goes into effect on January 1, 2014, there is a three-month grace period whereby an individual may go without coverage for up to three months without facing a penalty.
- The exchange run by the federal government (healthcare.gov), which allows individuals and small businesses to shop for health coverage, opened for enrollment on October 1, 2013 and will remain open until March 31, 2014. The Obama Administration has announced that the well-publicized glitches with the website should be fixed by the end of November 2013. Certain states (including Virginia) utilize the federal exchange, whereas other states (including Maryland and the District of Columbia) operate their own exchanges.

The following are pertinent Obamacare dates/deadlines:

Date	Description
October 1, 2013	All employers that are covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (generally any employer with two or more employees engaged in interstate commerce and with annual gross sales of at least \$500,000) were required to provide written notice to employees regarding Obamacare’s “health insurance exchange” by this date.
	Health exchanges opened for business
	Beginning of open enrollment on exchanges
December 15, 2013	Last date to enroll for health coverage to go into effect on January 1, 2014
January 1, 2014	Nearly all U.S. residents must have health coverage or pay a tax penalty (although individuals may go without coverage for up to three months at a time without facing a penalty)
	Beginning of coverage of plans sold on exchanges and purchased by December 15, 2013
March 31, 2014	End of open enrollment for 2014
	Deadline to enroll in plan or face tax penalty (because of three-month grace period)

October 15, 2014	Open enrollment for 2015 begins
December 7, 2014	Open enrollment for 2015 closes
January 1, 2015	All employers with 50 or more full-time or “full-time equivalent” employees must offer healthcare plans to full-time employees or pay a tax penalty

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