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More than 700 pages of healthcare rules released

By Megan R. Wilson - 03/01/13 01:37 PM ET

The Obama administration on Friday released more than 700 pages of new regulations to implement portions of the Affordable Care Act.

The four rules, which are scheduled for publication in mid-March, finalize both major and minor parts of the healthcare reform law that Congress passed in 2010.

Three of the regulations are final and roll out the [multistate healthcare exchanges](#) and reforms to the [insurance market](#), including provisions to encourage cost-sharing, stabilize health insurance premiums and prevent providers from denying coverage.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said the rules would “help to ensure that every American has access to high-quality, affordable health insurance.”

The rules will become effective on May 11, and HHS will take comments on an [interim final regulation](#) regarding cost-savings programs and government risk pooling for 60 days after those rules are published.

The other rule is a [proposal to implement](#) the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP), making it effective on Jan. 1, 2015.

The change in the effective date is due to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services receiving comments that warned of the difficulties in implementing the program.

The SHOPs will be integrated into state insurance exchanges as a service to small employers that choose to join.

In 2014, federally run SHOP exchanges will only allow employers to offer one plan to their workers. Employers will be able to choose from multiple plans, offering similar benefit levels, beginning in 2015. And states that run their own SHOP exchanges rather than deferring to the federal government are free to offer multiple plans as early as 2014.

Comments on the SHOP proposals are due by April 11.

— *Elise Viebeck and Sam Baker contributed to this report. It was updated on March 20.*

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