

Health Care Sharing Ministries

Health Care Sharing Ministry (HCSM) plans are provided by an organization coordinating medical expenses – **not an insurance company** - and the documents provided are not an insurance policy. The plan works by pooling the health care expenses of members, with each person sharing in the payment of medical expenses.

However, the decision to assist with medical bills is voluntary because participants are not compelled by law to contribute. Whether or not you receive a payment from the ministry for payment of medical expenses and whether or not this organization continues to operate, you are personally responsible for the payment of your medical bills.

HCSMs also do not have to follow Affordable Care Act regulations, including annual and lifetime limits and coverage for essential health benefits, and may apply pre-existing condition exclusions.

HCSMs implement their own exclusions. Some services and health conditions may not be subject to the sharing requirements. For example, an unmarried pregnant woman may be ineligible for maternity benefits, or other services such as alcohol or drug abuse treatment may be excluded from sharing.

Because of the limitations, the monthly sharing amount may appear attractive to consumers. HCSM plan enrollment has grown in the last couple of years. The Alaska Division of Insurance urges consumers to understand the limitations and restrictions involved before choosing an HCSM plan.

Because this is not insurance, the Alaska Division of Insurance does not regulate HCSMs. These plans do not have to comply with Alaska Insurance law.