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Affordable Care Act (ACA), aka Obamacare, requires that taxpayers have qualifying health care coverage. Those without will need to qualify for an exemption, or pay a penalty.

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Unless you've been way out of touch, you probably know that a key part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), aka Obamacare, requires that taxpayers have qualifying health care coverage. Those without will need to qualify for an exemption, or pay a penalty. This "Individual Shared Responsibility" provision applies to both individuals and families, so while preparing your tax return this year, here are some things you ought to know.

If in 2014, you, your spouse, and everyone else on your tax return (dependents) had "minimum essential coverage," which includes most employer-sponsored plans, as well as programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP and insurance purchased through the Health Insurance Marketplace, you're in fine shape. Just check the appropriate box that says you are insured for the full year. If there were months that someone on your return had no coverage, that person needs to qualify for an exemption or pay a penalty.

To qualify for an exemption, one of the following situations must exist, says the National Association of Enrolled Agents, an organization for tax professionals:

1. The individual does not have access to affordable coverage because the minimum annual premium available is more than eight percent of the household income;
2. The gap in coverage existed for less than three months; or,
3. The individual qualifies for other exemptions that include a hardship or being a member of a group that is exempt from health coverage (for example, incarcerated inmates or members of a federally-recognized Indian tribe).

Without coverage or an exemption, you'll have to pay a penalty for each month you

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