

Insurance Financial Advisor Health Reform Changes for Employers Could Start ‘Immediately’

**By Bob Graham
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Nearly all employers – whether insured and self-funded – will be affected by the new health care legislation, with some of those changes coming in the near future, according to a health insurance lawyer.

Those changes are likely to involve the need to revise health plan offerings and communications about coverage, said Marcia S. Wagner, managing director of The Wagner Law Group, a Boston-based practice specializing in employee benefits, executive compensation and Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) law.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed into law by President Barack Obama and then amended by the Health Care and Education Affordability Reconciliation Act, which revised some provisions and delayed certain effective dates, will impose new responsibilities on employers, individuals and insurers, as well as government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid.

“While most of the provisions of the amended reform act will not be effective until 2014, employers should be aware of the provisions that will take effect within the next few months and immediately reassess their plans,” Wagner said in a statement. “Employers should also assess their plans to prepare for plan design and administrative changes that will be required in the future.”

Among the provisions that could affect employers, either directly or indirectly, are those dealing with mandatory coverage, employer group health plans, premium assistance and premium tax credits, exchanges, insurance market, Medicare and Medicaid, and funding.

“These changes will affect both insured and self-funded group health plans and may require immediate action on the part of the employer,” Wagner added.