

HEALTH REFORM

Small Business Health Care Tax Credit

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How does an employer claim the credit?

A. The credit is claimed on the employer's annual income tax return. For a tax-exempt employer, the IRS will provide further information on how to claim the credit.

Q. Can premiums paid by the employer in 2010, but before the new health reform legislation was enacted, be counted in calculating the credit?

A. Yes. In computing the credit for a tax year beginning in 2010, employers may count all premiums for that tax year.

Q. What expenses are counted in calculating the credit?

A. Only premiums paid by the employer under an arrangement meeting certain requirements (a "qualifying arrangement") are counted in calculating the credit. Under a qualifying arrangement, the employer pays premiums for each employee enrolled in health care coverage offered by the employer in an amount equal to a uniform percentage (not less than 50 percent) of the premium cost of the coverage. If an employer pays only a portion of the premiums for the coverage provided to employees under the arrangement (with employees paying the rest), the amount of premiums counted in calculating the credit is only the portion paid by the employer. For example, if an employer pays 80 percent of the premiums for employees' coverage (with employees paying the other 20 percent), the 80 percent premium amount paid by the employer counts in calculating the credit. For purposes of the credit (including the 50 percent requirement), any premium paid pursuant to a salary reduction arrangement under a section 125 cafeteria plan is not treated as paid by the employer.

In addition, the amount of an employer's premium payments that counts for purposes of the credit is capped by the premium payments the employer would have made under the same arrangement if the average premium for the small group market in the State (or an area within the State) in which the employer offers coverage were substituted for the actual premium. If the employer pays only a portion of the premium for the coverage provided to employees (for example, under the terms of the plan the employer pays 80 percent of the premiums and the employees pay the other 20 percent), the premium amount that counts for purposes of the credit is the same portion (80 percent in the example) of the premiums that would have been paid for the coverage if the average premium for the small group market in the State were substituted for the actual premium.

Q. What is the average premium for the small group market in a State (or an area within the State)?

A. The average premium for the small group market in a State (or an area within the State) will be determined by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and published by the IRS. Publication of the average premium for the small group market on a State-by-State basis is expected to be posted on the IRS website by the end of April.

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Q. How is the credit reduced if the number of FTEs exceeds 10 or average annual wages exceed \$25,000?

A. If the number of FTEs exceeds 10 or if average annual wages exceed \$25,000, the amount of the credit is reduced as follows (but not below zero). If the number of FTEs exceeds 10, the reduction is determined by multiplying the otherwise applicable credit amount by a fraction, the numerator of which is the number of FTEs in excess of 10 and the denominator of which is 15. If average annual wages exceed \$25,000, the reduction is determined by multiplying the otherwise applicable credit amount by a fraction, the numerator of which is the amount by which average annual wages exceed \$25,000 and the denominator of which is \$25,000. In both cases, the result of the calculation is subtracted from the otherwise applicable credit to determine the credit to which the employer is entitled. For an employer with both more than 10 FTEs and average annual wages exceeding \$25,000, the reduction is the sum of the amount of the two reductions. This sum may reduce the credit to zero for some employers with fewer than 25 FTEs and average annual wages of less than \$50,000.

Example. For the 2010 tax year, a qualified employer has 12 FTEs and average annual wages of \$30,000. The employer pays \$96,000 in health care premiums for those employees (which does not exceed the average premium for the small group market in the employer's State) and otherwise meets the requirements for the credit.

The credit is calculated as follows:

1. Initial amount of credit determined before any reduction: $(35\% \times \$96,000) = \$33,600$
2. Credit reduction for FTEs in excess of 10: $(\$33,600 \times 2/15) = \$4,480$
3. Credit reduction for average annual wages in excess of \$25,000: $(\$33,600 \times \$5,000/\$25,000) = \$6,720$
4. Total credit reduction: $(\$4,480 + \$6,720) = \$11,200$
5. Total 2010 tax credit: $(\$33,600 - \$11,200) = \$22,400$.

Q. How is the number of FTEs determined for purposes of the credit?

A. The number of an employer's FTEs is determined by dividing (1) the total hours for which the employer pays wages to employees during the year (but not more than 2,080 hours for any employee) by (2) 2,080. The result, if not a whole number, is then rounded to the next lowest whole number. .

Example. For the 2010 tax year, an employer pays 5 employees wages for 2,080 hours each, 3 employees wages for 1,040 hours each, and 1 employee wages for 2,300 hours.

The employer's FTEs would be calculated as follows:

1. Total hours not exceeding 2,080 per employee is the sum of:
 - a. 10,400 hours for the 5 employees paid for 2,080 hours each $(5 \times 2,080)$
 - b. 3,120 hours for the 3 employees paid for 1,040 hours each $(3 \times 1,040)$
 - c. 2,080 hours for the 1 employee paid for 2,300 hours (lesser of 2,300 and 2,080)These add up to 15,600 hours
2. FTEs: 7 (15,600 divided by 2,080 = 7.5, rounded to the next lowest whole number)

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Q. How is the amount of average annual wages determined?

A. The amount of average annual wages is determined by first dividing (1) the total wages paid by the employer to employees during the employer's tax year by (2) the number of the employer's FTEs for the year. The result is then rounded down to the nearest \$1,000 (if not otherwise a multiple of \$1,000). For this purpose, wages means wages as defined for FICA purposes (without regard to the wage base limitation).

Example. For the 2010 tax year, an employer pays \$224,000 in wages and has 10 FTEs.

The employer's average annual wages would be: \$22,000 (\$224,000 divided by 10 = \$22,400, rounded down to the nearest \$1,000).

Q. If an owner of a business also provides services to it, does the owner count as an employee?

A. Generally, no. A sole proprietor, a partner in a partnership, a shareholder owning more than two percent of an S corporation, and any owner of more than five percent of other businesses are not considered employees for purposes of the credit. Thus, the wages or hours of these business owners and partners are not counted in determining either the number of FTEs or the amount of average annual wages, and premiums paid on their behalf are not counted in determining the amount of the credit.

Q. Do family members of a business owner who work for the business count as employees?

A. Generally, no. A family member of any of the business owners or partners, or a member of such a business owner's or partner's household, is not considered an employee for purposes of the credit. Thus, neither their wages nor their hours are counted in determining the number of FTEs or the amount of average annual wages, and premiums paid on their behalf are not counted in determining the amount of the credit. For this purpose, a family member is defined as a child (or descendant of a child); a sibling or step-sibling; a parent (or ancestor of a parent); a step-parent; a niece or nephew; an aunt or uncle; or a son-in-law, daughter-in-law, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law or sister-in-law.

Q. How is eligibility for the credit determined if the employer is a member of a controlled group or an affiliated service group?

A. Members of a controlled group (e.g., businesses with the same owners) or an affiliated service group (e.g., related businesses of which one performs services for the other) are treated as a single employer for purposes of the credit. Thus, for example, all employees of the controlled group or affiliated service group, and all wages paid to employees by the controlled group or affiliated service group, are counted in determining whether any member of the controlled group or affiliated service group is a qualified employer. Rules for determining whether an employer is a member of a controlled group or an affiliated service group are provided under Code section 414(b), (c), (m), and (o).

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