



**June 2011**

## **Year-round access to children's health insurance in the works**

*Coverage may begin as early as September*

### **When can Oregon children enroll in health insurance now?**

In Oregon, most – but not all – insurance companies enroll children under age 19 in the months of February and August only. Federal health reform prohibits insurance companies from denying coverage to children with pre-existing conditions. However, the law currently allows insurers to limit enrollment to specific times of year.

### **What's new?**

On May 23, 2011, Gov. John Kitzhaber signed Senate Bill 514, which paves the way for families to enroll children throughout the year.

### **When does this take effect?**

Draft rules to implement the bill would make this effective with applications received on or after Aug. 1, 2011. This means coverage would likely start Sept. 1, but check with your insurance company or agent on the start date.

### **Who is eligible for this coverage?**

Children under age 19 who aren't covered under a parent's employer plan and who apply for an individual health plan. Group plans through employers are already prohibited from denying coverage to anyone based on pre-existing conditions.

### **What does the bill actually do?**

The bill uses funds generated by an Oregon Medical Insurance Pool (high-risk program) assessment to cover the costs of the Children's Reinsurance Program. This program spreads the cost of insuring high-risk children among all insurance companies licensed to sell health insurance in Oregon. This reduces the concern that some companies will pay medical claims for a disproportionate number of sick children. As a result, insurance companies that sell individual health plans covering children are expected to offer plans throughout the year.

### **Why the proposed Aug. 1 date for applications?**

The Oregon Insurance Division must complete rulemaking to establish the mechanics of the Children's Reinsurance Program. Learn more about the rulemaking here:

[http://insurance.oregon.gov/rules/prop\\_admin\\_rules.html](http://insurance.oregon.gov/rules/prop_admin_rules.html)

## **Is the health statement still required?**

Even though insurance companies cannot deny coverage to children with health problems, they may need to have information about a child's health after Aug. 1 to make the reinsurance program work. This means that children may be required to complete the Oregon Standard Health Statement as part of their application.

## **What do all these changes mean for kids?**

Oregon has found a way to ensure that all children have health insurance through a variety of companies or programs. It means children with health problems can be on the same plan as the rest of their family members.

## **What about children in limited-income families?**

In Oregon, children have additional coverage options through Healthy Kids – and most of these options have been available year-round. However, enrollment in the full-cost option has been available twice a year – from Jan. 15 to Feb. 15 and from Aug. 15 to Sept. 15. For more information on Healthy Kids or to request an application, visit [www.oregonhealthykids.gov](http://www.oregonhealthykids.gov) or call 1-877-314-5678.

## **What about adults?**

Today, adults who need individual health plans can still be turned down for coverage based on pre-existing health conditions. However, Oregon has two programs available to individuals with pre-existing conditions, allowing insurance to be purchased through high-risk pools. Learn more at [www.oregon.gov/OHA/OPHP/OMIP/index.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OHA/OPHP/OMIP/index.shtml).

Beginning in 2014, people can no longer be turned down for health insurance based on pre-existing conditions. Oregon's health insurance exchange will also be available in 2014, making it easier to enroll in health insurance. Tax credits and subsidies will also be available through the exchange for those earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty line, or approximately \$88,200 for a family of four. Learn more at [www.oregon.gov/OHA/health-insurance-exchange.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OHA/health-insurance-exchange.shtml). Medicaid (Oregon Health Plan), serving Oregon's lowest income residents, will also be expanded at this time so that more people are eligible. In turn, insurance companies will not be allowed to reject **anyone** based on their health.