



Date: June 18, 2008

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June 23 is deadline for returning OHP-Standard applications mailed in May; 2,040 adults found eligible for health care so far

The 3,000 Oregonians who received applications in May for the Oregon Health Plan's Standard benefit package have until Monday to return them.

Applications may be mailed to the health plan office in Salem or may be turned in at any Oregon Department of Human Services office. People who have questions or need assistance may call 1-800-699-9075.

"So far, 2,040 uninsured, low-income Oregon adults have been found eligible for medical coverage," said Jim Edge, state Medicaid director in the Oregon Department of Human Services. "In addition, hundreds of other applications are being reviewed for eligibility or are pending while we wait for required income or citizenship documents to be submitted."

Approximately 6,200 applications have been returned to the health plan's Salem office, where most are submitted. For those applicants who are found ineligible, Edge said, the primary reason is that their income exceeds the requirement to have three consecutive months' income average below the federal poverty level (\$867 for an individual or \$1,467 for a household of three, for example).

When DHS invited uninsured, low-income adults to put their names on a reservation list in January and February, Edge said, the agency did not ask for income data. Not only might household income change by the time people received an application, he said, but some people who might have qualified might not have applied.

Each month, a state computer draws 3,000 names from the reservation list to receive OHP-Standard applications, which recipients then are given 45 days to

return. OHP-Standard covers nearly 20,000 adults and is part of the larger Oregon Health Plan program, which serves more than 408,000 people of all ages.

DHS will continue to enroll eligible adults in OHP-Standard until it reaches a monthly average of 24,000 people for the two-year budget period that ends June 30, 2009.

OHP-Standard covers physician visits, prescription drugs, mental health and chemical dependency services, emergency medical treatment and limited dental, hospital and vision services. OHP-Standard enrollees pay monthly premiums ranging from nothing to \$20, depending on household income and size.

Meanwhile, the Oregon Health Plan's Plus benefit package is always open for low-income people who are aged, blind, disabled, pregnant, younger than 19 or who qualify for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Applications for OHP-Plus are available by calling 1-800-359-9517 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Pacific time.

To expand health coverage to more Oregonians, Governor Ted Kulongoski last year named a seven-member board to make recommendations to be considered by the 2009 Oregon Legislature, which convenes Jan. 12. The panel, known as the Oregon Health Fund Board, has begun receiving committee reports and is meeting monthly to review them before making final recommendations to the Governor and legislative leaders this fall. The board's next meeting will be June 25 in Milwaukie.

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