

Cover Oregon News Release

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COVER OREGON NEWS RELEASE

January 7, 2014

Dear Community Partners,

Today Cover Oregon and the Oregon Health Authority announced that about 170,000 people have enrolled in health care coverage for January.

Thank you for everything you have done to help make it happen. Here is a copy of the news release.

New Year brings health coverage for 170,000 Oregonians through Cover Oregon and Oregon Health Plan

Even with difficult rollout and delay of Cover Oregon, state shows substantial enrollment in coverage

Durham, Ore. - The day after the deadline to enroll for January coverage, many more Oregonians now have access to comprehensive health coverage, according to figures released jointly today by Cover Oregon and the Oregon Health Authority.

About 170,000 people signed up for health insurance for January through Cover Oregon or the Oregon Health Plan by yesterday's enrollment deadline.

"There are about 170,000 Oregonians in every part of our state who are starting the New Year with comprehensive health care coverage. This shows that in Oregon we will not let barriers become blockades," said Governor Kitzhaber. "This new health care coverage will fundamentally improve Oregonians' lives, giving people coverage and security they have never had before. Additionally, new Oregon Health Plan members will have patient-focused coordinated care, with services designed to improve health, manage chronic conditions, and control costs."

More than 55,000 people shopped and purchased a private plan or enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan through Cover Oregon. Of those, about 20,000 people gained private coverage and more than 35,000 joined the Oregon Health Plan. Additionally, more than 114,500 people enrolled directly in the Oregon Health Plan through the Oregon Health Authority.

Bruce Goldberg, M.D., acting director of Cover Oregon, acknowledged that the delayed launch of a fully functioning website means that applying for coverage hasn't been easy for everyone.

Cover Oregon brings together 11 health insurance companies in one place. Today enrollment is a three-step process. First, customers apply online or by filling out a paper application. Second, Cover Oregon determines whether they are eligible for financial help and notifies them via phone, email and U.S. mail. Third, customers can go online to pick their plan and enroll.

When CoverOregon.com is fully functioning, the entire process will be online and will allow people to go from application to enrollment in one sitting.

"Cover Oregon has had a difficult start and there continue to be challenges. I want to thank Oregonians for their patience as we retooled the Cover Oregon application process so people can get the coverage they need in spite of problems with the website. The high level of interest we've seen shows that many Oregonians need the quality, affordable health insurance we are working hard to deliver throughout the open enrollment period," Goldberg said.

The coverage offered through Cover Oregon private plans and the Oregon Health Plan is comprehensive, including preventive care and health screenings, hospitalizations, maternity care, prescription drug coverage and mental health services. Additionally, starting this year, more low-income adults will qualify for the Oregon Health Plan, ending decades of scarce access to care. In the past, access to the Oregon Health Plan was so limited that names were drawn at random, creating a "health care lottery."

"We have left behind the days when health care coverage for low-income Oregonians was dependent on the luck of the draw," said Tina Edlund, acting director of the Oregon Health Authority.

Open enrollment continues through March for private health plans. Qualified low-income Oregonians can join the Oregon Health Plan at any time during the year.