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State to double number of Oregon Health Plan applications being mailed

State officials say they will double the number of Oregon Health Plan applications being mailed in August and September and send the final round of the applications in October.

The number is being increased to 6,000 for the next two months – up from the 3,000 mailed in each of the past five months – because the number of uninsured low-income adults returning applications and being found eligible for the Standard benefit plan has been lower than forecast.

OHP-Standard covers uninsured low-income adults who do not qualify for traditional Medicaid.

“We will mail 6,000 applications in each of the next two months and a final 3,000 applications in October,” said Jim Edge, state Medicaid director in the Oregon Department of Human Services. “After all applications are processed, we expect to reach the monthly average of 24,000 people that the budget will support during this two-year budget period.”

October’s mailing will bring to 30,000 the number of applications mailed to people whose names were randomly selected from the 91,000-plus names that were put on a reservation list in January and February.

So far, 3,355 people who have returned OHP-Standard applications have been found eligible for publicly financed medical coverage. OHP-Standard, which now covers more than 20,000 adults, is part of the state’s larger Medicaid program delivering medical insurance to approximately 425,000 people.

The rates at which people are returning applications and being found eligible has been below the forecast 70 percent rate, largely because some applicants' income is too high to qualify or because they fail to furnish required income or citizenship documents.

Counties in which the largest numbers of people have been enrolled after returning OHP-Standard applications mailed during March, April and May are Multnomah (643), Lane (311), Marion (245), Washington (206), Clackamas (183), Jackson (174), Douglas (148), Linn (96), Deschutes (94), Josephine (93), Klamath (81) and Coos (80). Only in rural Sherman, the state's smallest county, was no one found eligible during the first three months.

Of the first 2,941 applicants who were found eligible, 2,336 were white, 104 black, 96 Native American or Alaskan Native, 95 Asian and the balance Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander or unknown.

Applications are available in 10 languages. Of the first 7,183 completed applications returned for processing, 6,453 (90 percent) were English, 533 (7.4 percent) Spanish, 74 (1 percent) Russian, 61 (less than 1 percent) Vietnamese and another 62 in other languages.

The process DHS used to temporarily reopen the Oregon Health Plan's Standard plan followed consultation with legal, medical, disability, county and other representatives, and federal approval. A public-awareness campaign inviting uninsured low-income Oregonians to put their names on the reservation list in January and February was the most comprehensive in DHS history.

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