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6,000 Oregon Health Plan applications being mailed Thursday; 3,928 people found eligible so far

Six thousand people whose names were drawn from the Oregon Health Plan reservation list received applications this month to enable them to apply for the health plan's Standard benefit package.

The mailing of 6,000 applications Aug. 7 brought to 21,000 the number of applications mailed since March. The Standard plan, begun in 1994 as a key part of the Oregon Health Plan, provides coverage for adults who do not qualify for traditional Medicaid coverage.

"So far, more than 4,000 uninsured low-income people have been found eligible for health care coverage through this process," said Jim Edge, state Medicaid director in the Oregon Department of Human Services. "By October, when we will mail a final round of applications, we will have sent 30,000 applications to people whose names were randomly drawn from the 91,000 names originally on the reservation list."

Because the state does not have the budget to support Standard coverage for all eligible low-income adults, estimated at 140,000, DHS invited uninsured low-income adults to put their names on a reservation list in January and February. To determine who will receive applications, a computer randomly draws names each month.

The Standard plan accounts for roughly 5 percent of the state's approximately 425,000 Oregon Health Plan enrollees. The larger OHP-Plus program is always open to uninsured low-income Oregonians who are over 65, 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.

The August mailing will go to residents of every county but Gilliam and Wheeler, none of whose residents' names were randomly drawn for the August mailing; residents of those two counties did receive applications in some prior months. The largest number of applications will go to residents of Multnomah, Lane, Marion, Washington, Clackamas, Jackson, Douglas, Josephine, Deschutes and Linn counties. Rural Grant, Sherman and Wallowa counties will each receive fewer than 10 applications.

Thursday's mailing of 6,000 applications is double the number mailed in March, April, May, June or July, a decision officials made because fewer applicants were being found eligible than had been expected. Six thousand applications also will be mailed in September, and a final round of 3,000 will be mailed in October. Edge said this number of applications is expected to attract enough eligible applicants to give OHP-Standard a biennial monthly average of 24,000 people, which the budget will support.

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

To qualify for OHP-Standard, an applicant must show three months' consecutive income that averages less than the federal poverty level (\$867 monthly for an individual or \$1,467 for a household of three, for example). To qualify, applicants also must provide income documentation and proof of citizenship and identity. State health plan officials will look up birth certificates for people born in Oregon and will hold incomplete applications for people who are making a good-faith effort to obtain documents. People with questions about how to complete the application may call 1-800-699-9075 for assistance.

The deadline for returning the applications being mailed Thursday is Sept. 22.

Meanwhile, Aug. 22 is the deadline for people to return applications that were mailed in early July. Applications may be returned to the Salem processing center or to any DHS local office.

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