



Date: August 19, 2008

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Friday is deadline to return OHP-Standard applications mailed in July

Low-income Oregonians who received applications for the Oregon Health Plan's Standard benefit package in July have until Friday to return them.

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

"So far, 4,749 low-income Oregonians who returned OHP-Standard applications have been found eligible for medical coverage," said Jim Edge, state Medicaid director in the Oregon Department of Human Services. "We encourage people to return their applications by the deadline even if they are still obtaining needed income or citizenship documents."

Edge said DHS will accept applications without required documentation if applicants are making a good-faith effort to obtain it.

OHP-Standard now covers more than 24,200 people in a program designed to provide health care coverage for adults who do not qualify for traditional Medicaid. DHS has mailed 21,000 applications since March 5, will mail 6,000 more applications in September and a final round of 3,000 applications in October to people whose names were put on a reservation list last winter.

The OHP-Standard budget will support a monthly average of 24,000 people during the two-year budget period ending June 30, 2009. Because fewer than 24,000 were covered during the first half of the biennium, more than that can be covered during the second half.

More than 10,000 OHP-Standard applications have been returned so far. The most frequent reasons applicants are found ineligible is their income over a three-month period averages more than the federal poverty level (\$867 for an individual or \$1,467 for a household of three, for example).

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 clients 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 65 and older, 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.

In all, the Oregon Health Plan covers about 425,000 Oregonians, more than half of whom are children.

An estimated 576,000 of Oregon's 3.7 million residents have no health insurance. To expand health care coverage to more Oregonians, Governor Ted Kulongoski last year named a seven-member board that will make recommendations this fall. The panel, created by Senate Bill 329 and known as the Oregon Health Fund Board, will meet again Aug. 27 in Portland and conduct a series of 10 community meetings across the state in September. Details are on the board's Web site at <http://www.oregon.gov/OHPPR/HFB/index.shtml> on the Internet.

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