



NEWS RELEASE

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OPEN ENROLLMENT OFF TO A STRONG START, EARLY STATISTICS RELEASED BY COVERED CALIFORNIA AND DHCS SHOW

*Improved Website, Thousands of Enrollment Assistants, New Storefronts,
Expanded Service Center Hours Ready to Help Consumers Gain Coverage*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Covered California and the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) announced that 69,245 consumers submitted applications for health coverage, including Medi-Cal, during the first four days of the 2015 open-enrollment period.

"We had a strong start when we opened Saturday for Covered California, and we are continuing to see tremendous interest from people seeking security for themselves and their families in both Covered California plans and Medi-Cal coverage," Covered California Executive Director Peter V. Lee said. "There still is a lot of work to do, though, and we are committed to making sure every Californian gets the health care coverage they want and deserve."

As of Tuesday, Nov. 18, about 35,877 consumers were determined eligible for coverage through Covered California, and 11,357 picked a plan. By comparison, in October 2013 it took 15 days to reach 10,972 plan selections.

About 33,368 applicants were deemed to be likely eligible for Medi-Cal from Nov. 15 to Nov. 18. So far in 2014, Medi-Cal has enrolled more than 2.2 million Californians.

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“We’re very pleased by this great start for California in year two of the Affordable Care Act,” said DHCS Director Toby Douglas. “Once again, Medi-Cal is playing an important role by providing comprehensive coverage for many uninsured Californians. While Medi-Cal enrollment is open all year, it’s important that everyone without insurance apply now, so if they don’t qualify for Medi-Cal they can still enroll in affordable, high-quality coverage from a Covered California plan.”

The second open enrollment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act began on Saturday, Nov. 15, and continues through Feb. 15, 2015. Californians used the enhanced website at www.CoveredCA.com to apply for coverage using a single, streamlined application.

For the vast majority of consumers the website is working well. In four days, there were 314,100 unique visitors to CoveredCA.com.

The upgraded enrollment portal infrastructure allows for greater user capacity and faster page loads so that consumers do not have to return later to complete an application. The website is easier to explore for health coverage options, including Medi-Cal.

The Service Center is now open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday. In addition, the Service Center will be open every Sunday from Nov. 16 through Dec. 15 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Covered California added more than 200 storefront locations open on evenings and weekends to give consumers who work full time a place they can visit and return to enroll or get questions answered.

More than 12,000 Certified Insurance Agents, 10,000 county eligibility workers and more than 6,000 Certified Enrollment Counselors are partnered with Covered California, ready to help enroll consumers.

Covered California anticipates a total enrollment of 1.7 million Californians — excluding Medi-Cal enrollees — by the end of the second open-enrollment period: 1.5 million in subsidized coverage and 230,000 in unsubsidized coverage. This forecast represents an increase of about 500,000 in total enrollment.

“We’re throwing open the doors to health care for millions of Californians, many of whom have not been insured for years — and in some cases never,” Lee said. “Tell your friends and family members. Tell your neighbors and coworkers. Tell them about this opportunity to get care and provide security for themselves and their family. We’re ready to help.”

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About Covered California

Covered California is the state's marketplace for the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Covered California, in partnership with the California Department of Health Care Services, was charged with creating a new health insurance marketplace in which individuals and small businesses can get access to affordable health insurance plans. Covered California helps individuals determine whether they are eligible for premium assistance that is available on a sliding-scale basis to reduce insurance costs or whether they are eligible for low-cost or no-cost Medi-Cal. Consumers can then compare health insurance plans and choose the plan that works best for their health needs and budget. Small businesses can purchase competitively priced health insurance plans and offer their employees the ability to choose from an array of plans and may qualify for federal tax credits.

Covered California is an independent part of the state government whose job is to make the new market work for California's consumers. It is overseen by a five-member board appointed by the governor and the Legislature. For more information about Covered California, please visit www.CoveredCA.com.

About the Department of Health Care Services

The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) works to preserve and improve the physical and mental health of all Californians. DHCS provides health care services for more than 11.3 million Californians through Medi-Cal, including medical, dental, mental health, substance use treatment services, and long-term services and supports. This is accomplished through an investment of approximately \$90 billion annually in public funds for the care of low-income families, children, pregnant women, seniors and persons with disabilities. DHCS focuses on delivering quality, effective services primarily through coordinated systems of care provided by 22 Medi-Cal managed care plans located in all of California's 58 counties. For more information about DHCS, please visit www.dhcs.ca.gov.

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