



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Uninsured Residents Urged to Get Info, Enroll During Open Enrollment Period

PITTSBURGH – Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Congressman Mike Doyle, Health Department Director Dr. Karen A. Hacker and Human Services Director Marc Cherna urged uninsured residents to learn more about their options for insurance coverage through the Affordable Care Act. The current Open Enrollment period began November 15 and continues through February 15, 2015.

“More than 28,000 people in Allegheny County signed up for the Affordable Care Act during the last enrollment period, but there are estimates that another approximately 71,000 people could be eligible for health insurance in Allegheny County,” said County Executive Fitzgerald. “We have the added benefit of having a number of trained helpers that can assist now. Having the one-on-one assistance can make a world of difference in whether a person completes the process and enrolls.”

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recently released new data to provide tools and information to consumers as they review 2015 health insurance plan information. This year, 25 percent more issuers are participating in the Marketplace, meaning that 90 percent of consumers will be able to choose from 3 or more issuers. Consumers can choose from an average of 40 health plans for 2015 coverage, based on data at the county level.

“The Affordable Care Act is putting high-quality health insurance within financial reach for America’s uninsured. Millions of Americans have already purchased insurance through Healthcare.gov and other ACA Marketplaces. On top of that, millions of low-income Americans have enrolled in Medicaid, which the ACA expanded,” said Congressman Mike Doyle. “If you don’t have health insurance – or if you bought insurance last year through the ACA Marketplaces – the current open season is an opportunity for you to find the health insurance that best meets your medical and financial needs. I encourage you to look into your options. A number of local organizations are available to help you assess your choices, see if you’re eligible for federal assistance in paying your premiums, and enroll in an insurance plan that matches your budget **and** your specific health care needs.”

In Allegheny County, More than 20 federally funded navigators and dozens of volunteer applications counselors are ready to offer assistance in Western Pennsylvania starting Saturday, In the Pittsburgh area, 125 organizations are listed as sources of information on the Affordable Care Act. Residents can find the organization nearest to them by visiting <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov/>. Additionally, the Health Insurance Marketplace Call Center is available 24/7 for customer service support, to start or finish an application, compare plans, enroll or ask a question. The number is 1-800-318-2596 (TTY: 1-855-889-4325). The Call Center is closed on Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

“For the past few months, the Health Department has been holding meetings to talk with residents about the health of the County. Our statistics show high incidences of chronic disease including; heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke and respiratory disease in Allegheny County,” said Dr. Hacker. “Health insurance, or lack thereof, obviously impacts these statistics. In 2009-10, 11% percent of adults aged 18-64 reported having to forgo health care due to cost within the prior year; 11% reported no health

insurance; and, 29 % had not completed a routine checkup in the past year. While we recognize that many obtained insurance in the first enrollment period, we know that many still do not have access. Having health insurance is an important step in improving our residents' health and we encourage residents to take advantage of this open enrollment period.”

For those in Western Pennsylvania, the United Way of Allegheny County's 2-1-1 line remains a resource for information and referral to healthcare Navigators who can help residents through the healthcare maze. A full [map of locations of navigators](#) is maintained by the Pennsylvania Health Access Network, and the Consumer Health Coalition is providing a running [calendar of enrollment events](#). There are also some important dates to be aware of if you are in need of coverage. Open enrollment began November 15, 2014 and must be in place for coverage to begin by January 1, 2015. Subsidies may not be available for individuals who enroll after the open enrollment period ends. On December 1, 2014, Healthy PA Medicaid Expansion Enrollment begins. For coverage to begin March 1, 2015, individuals must be enrolled by February 15, 2015.

“In Allegheny County, the Department of Human Services is focused on meeting the needs of the county's most vulnerable populations, and does so through a wide range of services and programs that are available to residents,” said Director Cherna. “This includes ensuring that employees of the Department can also provide information on the Affordable Care Act no matter the point of contact. Ensuring that those in our community who are vulnerable have the opportunity to be provided with health insurance is an important goal, and one that we are proud to play a role in.”

New for 2015, information on enrollment for small businesses can also be found at www.healthcare.gov. Businesses with 50 employees or fewer can offer The Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) plans. For customer service support, including assisting employers and employees who wish to apply for and enroll in SHOP, there is a SHOP Call Center. The phone number is 1-800-706-7893 and it is available Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. From November 15 through December 31, 2014, the SHOP Call Center is also open on weekends from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

In October of last year, the county launched an effort called Allegheny Activates to assist in collaboration of efforts aimed at encouraging enrollment in the Marketplace. The group consisted of representation from health care, unions, advocacy organizations, libraries, social service agencies, insurance companies, and faith-based organizations and worked together on outreach and education. Together, the group held dozens of enrollment and outreach events. With the addition of navigators in our region this time around, and the proactive approach that these organizations have taken in regards to enrollment, the collaborative group has continued, but only for the purpose of sharing information.

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