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Health care reform demystified for Ogden crowd

By [Randi Weston](#), [Standard-Examiner correspondent](#)

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OGDEN — The nitty gritty details of the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare and the ACA, were demystified for various attendees at a community discussion of the controversial program.

At the Main Branch of the Weber County Library on Tuesday night. Jason Stevenson, education and communications director for the Utah Health Policy Project, led the talk and brought ease to the minds of some concerned citizens in the process.

The Utah Health Policy Project is a non-partisan and non-profit organization whose mission, as listed on the organization's website, is "to create quality, affordable, comprehensive health care coverage for all people in Utah through research, policy innovation, and civic participation." According to Stevenson, he and his colleagues have done over 50 educational presentations on the ACA around Utah this year.

Many people in the room Tuesday night were glad they decided to attend the presentation. Concerns about how the ACA would be paid for and how penalties for ignoring the individual mandate would be issued were addressed.

Hal Hammon, of Clinton, had concerns about penalties and navigators (people hired to help citizens with the transition to the ACA).

"The one I was mostly concerned with was the navigators because I'm computer illiterate and I need people to help me. So, that was the main reason I came here. It's still kind of confusing, but it settled me down a little bit. I was worried about the penalty thing. I thought they were going to come and get me and put me in jail, but evidently that's not the case. So, I'm pretty good with that."

When asked if he thought other Utah citizens with questions about the ACA should attend a UHPP talk, Hal said, "I think they should. Don't be scared of it. I think the more education the better you are, all the time. I thought it was great; really informative."

Russell Baldwin, of Ogden, was also relieved by the information he received at Tuesday's talk. "I thought it was very informative. I feel a whole lot better about things now. I was quite worried."

Baldwin suffers from neuropathy in his arms and legs and lost use of his limbs until he was able to get infusions, at the cost of \$10,000 a month, through Medicaid.

"I was basically here to see if Obamacare would impact that, and it looks like it's not going to, thank goodness."

Baldwin said he still has lingering concerns over Medicaid expansion in Utah and how that will affect his coverage. The Medicaid Expansion Community Workgroup is currently working on a state solution and will give a presentation to Utah lawmakers on Sept. 26.

Stevenson welcomes anyone who wants to know more or has concerns about the ACA to attend one of his talks.

“There’s a lot of appetite for information, and especially for fact-based information because there’s just been so much myth spread about healthcare reform. You say the word Obamacare and everyone grimaces. But when you actually start getting into the details of what’s in the law and how it could help them or help people and their family, people start to nod their heads and they start to realize, “OK, there’s some good things here, maybe I should listen a little bit more.”

Stevenson said he knows people have strong feelings about the ACA, and he welcomes healthy debate at his presentations.

“As long as it doesn’t disrupt the flow of the conversation, it’s great to get people’s viewpoints because people do have strong opinions about the Affordable Care Act and about health reform, and so do I. It’s good to have that kind of debate and really get beyond the headlines and the 30-second sound bite on TV, and actually get into the bowels of the law and find out how it’s going to help people.

“When it ceases to be a congressional catfight and people start to talk about how it could affect people in their families and in their communities, I notice that even if people still have strong opinions, people are willing to accept that there are some aspects of the law that could be beneficial. It is the law of the land, it’s going to be happening, and here in Utah we might as well do good by making it work as best we can.”

Stevenson and the UHPP will be doing presentations at the University of Utah Health Sciences Library at noon today and at Bountiful City Hall at 7 p.m. today.

For more information about UHPP, you can visit the organization’s website at <http://www.healthpolicyproject.org/>

If you would like to schedule a UHPP presentation in your community, you may contact Jason Stevenson at Stevenson@healthpolicyproject.org.

More information: The health care overhaul - what you need to you: <http://hosted.ap.org/interactives/2013/health-overhaul/>