

Utah task force gets update on the Affordable Care Act

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SALT LAKE CITY, (ABC 4 Utah) – More people are signing up for health insurance on the federal marketplace.

That's according to new numbers released by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Thursday, the Health Reform Task Force got an update on the numbers, progress and problems from industry experts.

"It's much quicker to access, running much smoother, fewer glitches, fewer freezes, so for the most part it's working really well for us and our clients," said Lloyd Coleman, President of the Utah Association of Health Underwriters.

Coleman represents was one of many industry insiders to testify before the task force.

The hearing included new enrollment numbers from Utah.

As of November 30th, 1,865 Utahns have selected a plan on healthcare.gov, up from 357 in October.

13,663 have completed applications, but have not selected a plan.

Keep in mind that was before some of the problems with the site were declared fixed by the President.

"We anecdotally know that people are signing up in droves in December and the numbers we just got recently don't reflect those numbers," said Jason Stevenson, with Utah Health Policy Project.

Even though the website is working better, there are still problems being reported in Utah.

Some are being told they can't go forward, because they qualify for Medicaid, when they don't.

Individual providers are also having trouble with direct enrollment through the federal market place.

The website can still get bogged down with too many users as well.

Another concern is who and who is not signing up.

Coleman says people who haven't been able to get insurance in the past, who are considered high risk are jumping at the chance, but he fears the key component to drive premiums down is holding off.

"I'm not sure we're getting the healthier people or the younger people, so the idea of sharing the risk when the pool is just a puddle is really scary," said Coleman.

Scary in that if the so called "young invincibles," who are uninsured at twice the rate of other Utahns opt for the fine instead, there may be nothing affordable about the new act.

Local policy groups are turning to social media to reach the "young invincibles," trying to convince them to sign up, knowing they are a key to the new law.

Anyone hoping to have insurance by January 1, 2014 needs to sign up by December 23, 2013.

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