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357 Utahns enrolled in health care in the first month of federal marketplace availability

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SALT LAKE CITY — Fewer than 400 Utahns have successfully signed up for health care plans using the federal health insurance marketplace during the first month it was made available, according to the federal government and [numbers it released](#) Wednesday.

Those few hundred make up a small part of the 106,185 Americans who have selected plans and completed enrollment for health insurance beginning Jan. 1, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Nearly 75 percent of those enrolled, however, completed the process through a state-based marketplace and not healthcare.gov, the numbers show.

The department reports that of the 6,186 completed applications from Utahns (to insure a total of 14,580), 357 have selected a plan to complete their enrollment. Another 446 applications are pending.

Sen. Orrin Hatch said Wednesday that the numbers are "a lot worse than advertised."

"This isn't what the American people were promised," he said in a prepared statement.

The Obama administration had predicted that about 500,000 Americans would enroll in health care coverage the first month it was available via the federal website.

The website, www.healthcare.gov, has been criticized for not being tested and ready when it launched on Oct. 1. The site has, however, undergone numerous technical revisions since it launched.

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius said during a press conference Wednesday that with "continued improvements" to the website, she expects enrollment to "grow substantially throughout the next five months."

"The promise of quality affordable coverage is increasingly becoming reality for this first wave of applicants to the health insurance marketplace," Sebelius said. "There is no doubt the level of interest is strong."

Enrollment is open until March 31 for coverage to begin in the coming year, and the administration is working on an extended outreach and education plan to enroll more people.

A few local organizations have been tasked with employing trained navigators and application counselors, including Take Care Utah, an outfit of the Utah Health Policy Project. It is hosting three events at different locations in Salt Lake City on Friday to help the public enroll for coverage and navigate the potentially complex system.

The educational events, also providing access to computer labs for Internet access, are to be held on Nov. 15, from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m., at 615 S. 300 East, 8446 S. 300 West (Harrison Street) and at 3100 S. Redwood Road.

In addition to those already enrolled, another 975,407 in the U.S. — including 9,318 in Utah — have applied but have not yet selected a plan, Sebelius said.

Another 396,261 Americans, including 4,816 Utahns, have been determined eligible for Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program coverage under rules set forth by the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. More than 3,880 Utahns have qualified through the site for federal subsidies to decrease their premium costs.

About 34 percent of Americans who have accessed the site so far and either completed enrollment or partially completed applications, have qualified for financial help to do so.

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