

Provo Daily Herald

Utah health plan enrollment climbs in January

Link: http://www.heraldextra.com/news/state-and-regional/utah/utah-health-plan-enrollment-climbs-in-january/article_e2fd4a4a-e81e-5af1-8794-d9149d1162ce.html

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Enrollment in health care plans on the federal website jumped in Utah again last month, according to new government figures released Wednesday.

About 29,400 people signed up for plans in Utah from Oct. 1 to Feb 1, an increase of almost 60 percent from the end of December.

A similar jump occurred around the country as 1 million more people signed up last month, with a total of 3.3 million signing up since October.

The online marketplace was plagued by glitches when it launched last fall and prevented many from enrolling early on.

There are six weeks left for enrollment numbers to match an unofficial White House goal of 7 million people signing up by the end of March.

Utah's goal is to have about 57,000 people sign up before open enrollment ends on Mar. 31, said Jason Stevenson, a spokesman for the Utah Health Policy Project, a nonprofit group assisting with enrollment efforts in the state.

The growing number of enrollees could put Utah "in striking distance" of that goal, he said.

If the number of people in Utah continues at the same pace for the next six weeks, it will be still be about 15,000 people shy of the goal.

The report released Wednesday shows about 31 percent of Utah enrollees are young adults ages 18 to 34.

That's a higher percentage than all states except Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, with 31 and 44 percent respectively.

Nationally, about 25 percent of all enrollees were in that coveted young adult group, which tend to be healthier.

The Kaiser Family Foundation has estimated that young people need to make up about 40 percent of enrollment in the new health program to balance out the higher costs of insuring older, sicker people.

Like the rest of the country, most of Utah's enrollees received help paying their plan premiums. About 85 percent of Utah people who signed up received financial assistance.

The so-called silver plans, which cover about 70 percent of medical costs, were the most popular choice in Utah.

A little more than half of everyone signing up in Utah chose that plan. Around the country, about three out of five people chose that plan.

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