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So far, nearly 50,000 Utahns in Obamacare for 2015

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Nearly 50,000 Utahns signed up for “Obamacare” in the first month of enrollment for the coming year, according to a federal progress report.

Visitors to HealthCare.gov say the site is running smoothly this time around, compared with 2013’s repeated glitches and long delays. The early tally released by federal officials Tuesday shows sign-ups are up more than double: As of Dec. 28, 2013, about 18,600 Utahns had picked a plan on the federal site. This year, 49,740 Utahns had enrolled by Dec. 15, the cutoff for coverage beginning Jan. 1. About half of those signed up for the first time; the other half re-enrolled.

Jason Stevenson, communications director for Utah Health Policy Project, says he’s seen a similar split in traffic to his group’s office and at TakeCareUtah.org, which lists information about health insurance and connects users to advisers.

“This continues to show that the insurance options available to Utahns are in demand,” he said, “and people are signing up.”

This time, the enrollment window is much shorter. It began Nov. 15 and closes Feb. 15.

“It’s important for people to realize this is the time to sign up,” Stevenson said.

For 2014, the fine for adults who went without insurance is the greater of \$95 per person or 1 percent of household income above the threshold for filing taxes.

In future years, that fee will climb.

Nationwide, the most recent figures show that about 6.5 million consumers have enrolled so far for 2015 coverage through HealthCare.gov.

In Utah, visits to TakeCareUtah.org, which is operated in part by the Utah Health Policy Project, are up fourfold from last March, when the enrollment period was closing.

The new figures offer an early glimpse, officials stress. The snapshot omits people who opted for their plans to renew automatically, which happened from Dec. 16 to 18.

Utah insurance officials say people should take a fresh look at their options, rather than simply renewing this year's insurance.

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