

# More Utahns signing up for Obamacare than last year

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Since open enrollment for health insurance through the Affordable Care Act began four weeks ago, it seemed to Utah Health Policy Project officials that more people were walking through their door to sign up than in 2015.

That feeling was quantified Wednesday when federal officials released data showing that 46,652 had signed up so far in 2016, compared to 37,816 last year. Open enrollment began Nov. 1.

"This is our first look at data that provides more information than what we've seen anecdotally ... that the sign up rate is up," said Jason Stevenson, the project's education and communications director.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) created online insurance marketplaces that allow consumers to find the best plan to fit their needs by comparing prices and networks. They also can qualify for federal tax credits that help reduce the overall cost of coverage.

The upward trend is being felt across the country. This year's enrollment has hit 2.1 million in the U.S., compared to the 2 million who signed up last year, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

This uptick could be attributed to President-elect Donald Trump's comments about repealing and replacing the ACA, Stevenson said.

When people feel like something will be taken away, he added, they start to value it more.

"People are realizing insurance is good for them and their families," he said.

But he cautioned that this increase may not continue through the open enrollment deadline.

Utahns have until Jan. 31, 2017, to sign up for insurance on [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov). However, the deadline is Dec. 15 if individuals want their coverage to begin Jan. 1.

"We're seeing competing pressures: people seeking out insurance because they realize the new administration wants to make drastic changes and they want to be insured while they still can, and people who are apathetic because they realize that the coverage could be taken away," Stevenson said.

For free assistance, Utahns can contact an insurance agent at [utahinsurancedepartment.com](http://utahinsurancedepartment.com) or talk to a Take Care Utah expert at [takecareutah.org](http://takecareutah.org) or by calling 211.

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