

## Residents of 35 Oregon counties receiving OHP-Standard applications

*by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources*

Across Oregon, 3,000 residents in 35 counties are receiving applications this week that will enable them to learn whether they are eligible for the Oregon Health Plan's Standard benefit package. The Oregon Department of Human Services mailed the applications Monday to people whose names a computer randomly selected from a reservation list on which 91,000-plus Oregon residents signed up during January and February. DHS expects to enroll 10,000 low-income adults during the next several months. "We recognize the number of low-income adults we can enroll in health care is far fewer than the estimated 135,000 who are eligible," said Lynn Read, senior deputy administrator in the state Medicaid office at DHS. "But for those people who are found eligible, having health insurance can truly be a life-changing experience." Applications that were mailed this week are due back to DHS by May 8 to be considered for eligibility. Applications may be mailed to Salem or taken to any DHS office or Area Agency on Aging office. An application may be submitted even if it is missing some required information or documentation the applicant is trying to obtain. Assistance with completing an application is available at any DHS or AAA office or by calling 1-800-699-9075. The Standard program serves approximately 17,700 low-income Oregon adults who do not qualify for traditional Medicaid. OHP-Standard is part of the state's larger Medicaid program, which serves 398,000 people. Read said residents of every county except Wheeler are receiving applications this week, ranging from 756 in Multnomah County to one each in rural Gilliam and Sherman counties. The number of applications being mailed to each county roughly parallels the number of individuals who signed up in each county. Just 35 residents of Wheeler County put their names on the reservation list, the fewest of any Oregon county. People in the 35-44 age group are receiving the largest number of applications in April, 757, followed by 696 applications sent to people ages 45-54. Some 399 applications, or approximately 13 percent of the 3,000 mailed, were sent to people ages 19-24. Oregonians in their early 20s, who account for 15 percent of the names on the reservation list, are the least likely to have health insurance. The state estimates 576,000 Oregonians are uninsured. That is 15.6 percent of the population, slightly fewer than the 16.6 percent who are uninsured nationally. In 1996, when the budget for OHP-Standard supported health insurance for five times as many people as now, the rate of uninsured Oregonians was 10.7 percent. Read said tens of thousands of low-income Oregonians are believed to be eligible for the Oregon Health Plan's separate Plus benefit package, which is always open. For example, an estimated 60,000 uninsured children are eligible if they live in households earning as much as 185 percent of the federal poverty level (approximately 32,500 for a family of three). An application for the Plus benefit package may be requested by calling 1-800-359-9517 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Pacific time.

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