

Deadline looms for Oregon health plan applicants

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

SALEM, Ore. -- For 3,000 Oregonians whose names were drawn in April to receive applications for the Oregon Health Plan's Standard benefit package, Friday is the deadline to return applications to the Oregon Department of Human Services. So far, DHS has mailed OHP-Standard applications more than 10,000 people and, of those who returned their applications, 1,649 people have been found eligible for health care programs. Some applications continue to be reviewed for eligibility. "We are encouraging people who have applications to submit them by the deadline even if they are not complete," said Lynn Read, senior deputy administrator in the state Medicaid office at DHS. "We can begin processing applications even while people obtain necessary information such as documentation of income or citizenship. If an application isn't submitted by the deadline, it cannot be considered." People may get assistance with completing applications by calling 1-800-699-9075 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Pacific time. Read said it may be too late to mail April's applications to arrive in Salem by Friday, and recommended applications instead be submitted to any DHS office by Friday at 5 p.m. The 3,000 people who received applications in May, meanwhile, have until June 23 to return them. During five weeks in January and February, DHS invited uninsured, low-income Oregonians to put their names on a reservation list from which a computer randomly draws names each month to receive OHP-Standard applications. Applications will continue to be mailed monthly until the number of people enrolled reaches a monthly average of 24,000, which the two-year budget will support. The reason some applicants are not being found eligible for medical care is that some low-income people whose names are on the reservation list do not meet the test of having incomes below the federal poverty level (for example, a three-month average income of \$867 for an individual). At least 12 percent of 91,000-plus names originally on the reservation list were submitted by third parties such as hospitals, missions and shelters, county health departments and family members. DHS asked only for name, address and birth date, and did not screen individuals for income as their names were added to the reservation list. The number of OHP-Standard applications mailed in March, April and May range from 2,317 to metropolitan Multnomah County residents to four applications sent to residents of rural Wheeler County. OHP-Standard covers physician visits, prescription drugs, emergency medical care, mental health and chemical dependency treatment, and limited dental, hospital and vision care. Monthly premiums range from nothing to \$20 a month depending on household size and income. Meanwhile, the Oregon Health Plan's Plus program is always open to low-income people who are aged, blind, disabled, pregnant, younger than 19 or people who qualify for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. To request an application, call 1-800-359-9517.

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