

Open enrollment for health insurance starts

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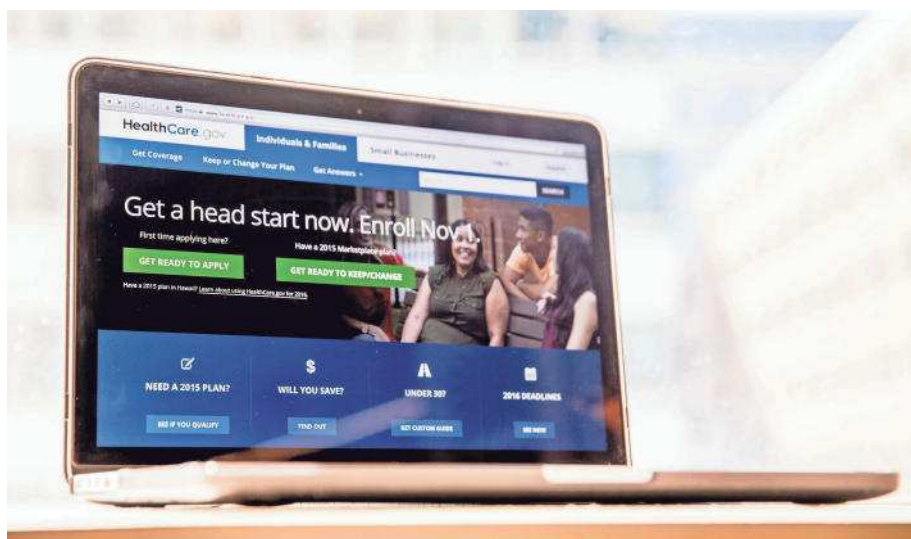
Oregonians who don't receive health insurance from an employer or another program are able to purchase insurance through the federal exchange HealthCare.gov now.

Open enrollment runs from Nov. 1 through Dec. 15 for individuals who want to sign up for insurance for the first time, renew insurance or change their plan.

The exchange is a product of the Affordable Care Act and helped Oregon reduce its uninsured population to about 5 percent.

"In Oregon, we want people to get health insurance," Gov. Kate Brown said in a statement. "Now is the time to get health insurance if you don't already have it."

Three insurance companies are offering plans for residents of Marion and Polk counties — Kaiser Permanente, Moda Health and Providence Health Plan. Most counties in the state have two insurance companies with plans people can choose from, though Douglas and Lincoln counties only have one.



The HealthCare.gov website, where people can buy health insurance, is displayed on a laptop.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

But the exchanges will be open far less time this year than in the past.

The website will be down each Sunday (except Dec. 10) and also tonight, the

first night of enrollment.

The federal government said that the shut downs are for regular maintenance to ensure the exchange can continue functioning properly.

The open-enrollment period also will be 45 days shorter than in previous years — cut by about half — and funds meant for outreach, education and advertising were slashed.

Critics have said the current administration is intentionally trying to dissuade or reduce enrollment by putting roadblocks in the way.

While the Affordable Care Act has increased the number of insured individuals nationwide, critics, including President Donald Trump, say the system is failing as insurers leave the market and premiums continue to rise.

Republicans in Congress tried several times over the summer to repeal and replace the law — a long-time rallying cry for conservatives. Failing that, Trump took a first step in early October to undo parts of the law via executive order, specifically by removing some cost sharing subsidies that allowed insurers to provide cheaper co-pays and deductibles.

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DACA

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Fernanda Ibarra, 17, helped organize McKay High School's walkout along with her colleagues from MECha, or Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan.

Ibarra, a native of Michoacan, Mexico, grasped a sign with the phrase "undocumented & unafraid."

"I want to graduate high school, go to college and achieve what my parents were not able to," Ibarra said. "We want to fulfill the dreams of the original dreamers — our parents."

Every student standing on the capitol steps pulled out their cellphones and called Oregon's Republican U.S. Rep. Greg Walden's office in Washington, D.C., in hope of personally demanding that a Dream Act be enacted by the end of the year. Trump advised Congress to preserve DACA through legislation within six months of his announcement to rescind the program in September.

Students covered one ear to drown out hundreds of their peer's voices as they simultaneously left messages on Walden's voicemail, each sharing their personal stories of being undocumented in Oregon.

After leaving voicemails, students tweeted Walden asking him to "be on the right side of history defend immigrant youth — pass a clean #DreamActNow without militarization & enforcement." Some students attached photos of themselves standing on the capitol with their signs in hand.

Leonardo Reyes, a coordinator with Oregon DACA Coalition, helped reach out to student leaders at local high schools to inform them of the nationwide effort. The walkouts themselves, he said, were purely student-driven.

"It's a struggle that affects the youth the most, so it's amazing to see them standing up for their rights," Reyes said.

"Keeping Dreamers and their families together is something that should be uniting our nation not dividing it."

U.S. REP. KURT SCHRADER
OREGON DEMOCRAT

The idea of personally leaving voicemails for Walden was born from the student's desire to be proactive about advocating for change in the wake of DACA's rescind by the federal government.

A representative from Oregon Democrat U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader's office read a statement in his absence.

"Keeping Dreamers and their families together is something that should be uniting our nation not dividing it," Schrader said in a statement. "I stand ready to fight for all Dreamers and fight all attempts at a border wall."

Schrader said currently shares stories of Oregon DACA recipients on the house floor, actively urges his colleagues to pass a Dream Act and won't stop until a Dream Act is stopped.

"Dreamers who have benefited from DACA make our state, and our country, a better place and we cannot afford to go backwards," Schrader said.

The Oregon DACA Coalition was also celebrating its one-year anniversary as an organization, one year following Trump's election.

"Our goal was to engage the community in a conversation about what it means to be undocumented," Reyes said. "We now feel a reduced sense of humanity toward undocumented immigrants, and we're using DACA as a platform to discuss that."

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Members of the Woodburn team gather for a group shot to celebrate their victory following the Woodburn vs. Corvallis OSAA Class 5A championship match. ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Soccer

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boys, proud of our coaching staff. It was a Team Woodburn effort."

What has garnered attention from all the Class 4A programs in Oregon this season is that Woodburn will drop down a classification next season.

Woodburn applied to the OSAA for its sports teams to play down a classification and was approved based upon their high percentage of students who receive lunches at a free or reduced rate and their winning percentage through all team sports.

For the four years starting with the 2018-2019 school year, Woodburn will play in Class 4A and play in the Oregon West Conference with Newport and Stayton, the teams that were playing for the 4A state championship Saturday.

Not that the soccer program wants, or needs, to play with smaller schools.

"That's definitely out of our control as a soccer program," Sanchez said. "It's kind of looking at what's best for the

school and in different sports. We're not too happy about moving down, given just the level of play. I think you have teams down there who can still take it to 5A teams.

"I don't want our boys thinking that going down to 4A, it's a guarantee. You've got to work just as hard because you have teams just as hungry."

There are multiple things about Woodburn that should concern Class 4A teams.

Woodburn has consistently produced high-caliber players and coaches on a yearly basis — Sanchez is the fourth Woodburn coach to win a state championship in the past eight years.

And this year Woodburn was loaded with juniors and had four seniors on the roster.

"The expectations are still the same," Karsseboom said. "We want another championship. It would be amazing to win three in a row."

"I know these juniors are going to want the same expectations as I do so it's just a matter of hard work and we'll get there."

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