

## Oregon Health Plan signup easier

### Having applications on-site to help tribal members

From IHS and MCP staff

Both the Tribe and Indian Health Service (IHS) recently received great news from the State of Oregon. The state has agreed to supply IHS with Oregon Health Plan (OHP) eligibility packets. Patients can now apply for OHP coverage in the Health & Wellness Center (H&WC) on a walk-in basis.

In the past, the Patient Advocate from the Managed Care Program (MCP), or representatives from the IHS Business Office, discussed with the patient a variety of eligibility criteria such as family size and income level.

If preliminary evaluation indicated the patient may be eligible for the OHP, the representative then phoned the state office in Salem and an application packet was sent to either the patient's home address or to the H&WC.

In either case, the patient had to then fill out all the appropriate paperwork and return the packet to Salem in a timely manner. It was this step that often caused problems; in some cases the patient did not follow through with the application in a timely manner once it was received.

Now that the IHS Business Office has an inventory of application packets, the application process should be greatly simplified. Now, once a Business Office or MCP representative determines a patient is most likely eligible for the OHP, she then can immediately help the patient fill out the eligibility application. It is then promptly mailed to the OHP Office. This will save the previous all too frequent "problem" of the patient being able to complete the paperwork in a timely manner. The end result should be many more eligible community members cov-

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ered by the OHP.

If all community members that are eligible for the OHP become covered, the benefit to community members will be great. This will be felt both via the tribally operated Managed Care Program and the Indian Health Service Clinic located in the Health & Wellness Center.

#### Managed Care Program

The goal of the Managed Care Program (MCP), operated by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, is to make sure that when a Native American from the Warm Springs community sees a medical services provider outside of the Health and Wellness Center, such as a doctor or a hospital, that the care he/she receives is of good quality and at a reasonable cost.

The MCP has limited funds, so it is important that they are used efficiently.

Health care costs are rising after a period of years of rather gradual growth. Not only are there many technological advances which drive up costs, but the reimbursement process for services are more complex than ever. Medicare, OHP and insurances are reacting in a variety of ways. MCP costs are affected by the current environment, as reflected in the much higher costs it experienced in 1999 and 2000. This is most likely the start of a trend that will continue. The major challenge will be to position MCP to continue to

see that quality service at reasonable cost is provided to MCP-eligible patients in this environment with the limited funding MCP has.

The MCP is the "payer of last resort" for medical claims, which means it will pay medical claims for eligible people only after alternate resources have paid their appropriate share. Thus the use of alternate resources enables the MCP to provide more and better care for Native Americans by "stretching" its budget. The Oregon Health Plan (OHP) is one of these alternate resources. According to federal regulations (CFR 42; Ch. 1; Subpt. 36.23, F), a Native American is required to apply for the OHP if there is reason to believe that he/she may be eligible for it. Once on OHP, a person is required to fill out renewal forms at intervals determined by OHP.

The MCP does not pay for services for people who should have been on OHP but failed to follow the above process, so MCP denies any claims received and the patient is responsible for the bill. In fact, a patient's failure to follow through on application to OHP is the most common reason for MCP to deny payment of a claim.

#### Indian Health Service

The goal of the Indian Health Service located in the Health & Wellness Center is to provide quality care to all eligible community

members. Direct services such as general medical care, dentistry, and optometry in addition to ancillary services such as pharmacy and laboratory are available in the Warm Springs community. However, operating costs for the IHS are only partially funded through a congressional budget process that can become fairly political and unpredictable. Thus, at best, dollars that Congress allocates fund only a portion of the costs of operating the IHS Clinic. The remainder of the operating costs, as well as funding for capital equipment purchases, is provided through IHS billing various alternate resources, such as insurances and OHP, for the patient.

In other words, the more community members that are covered by OHP, the more dollars that IHS can collect from billing OHP for services it provides to community members. Operating and capital costs are thus provided for, which leads to higher quality of service.

#### Summary

The agreement between the IHS and the State of Oregon for the IHS Business Office to keep a supply of OHP eligibility packets on-site will be advantageous for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. This will be a big plus for the Tribe on two fronts: 1) It will now be much easier for eligible community members to sign up for OHP coverage. Thus, the State of Oregon will pay their medical bills for services off the Reservation, and they will no longer find themselves responsible for their medical bills once they are covered by OHP. 2) Because IHS bills OHP for care provided at the Health & Wellness Center, more dollars will be collected and thus available for health care at the Health & Wellness Center.

## Fire breaks out in Warm Springs jail

On June 22, at about 9:30 p.m., a fire broke out inside the juvenile section of the Warm Springs Detention Facility.

The facility holds 48 inmates; 36 adults and 12 juveniles. Of 46 inmates that were evacuated from the facility; 4 juveniles and 1 adult female were transported to Mountain View Hospital in Madras where they were treated for smoke inhalation. One of the juveniles had to be kept in intensive care for several days.

The remaining evacuated inmates were housed overnight at the police and fire substations, in Simnasho.

Several high risk inmates were housed in the Jefferson County Jail. Damage was limited only to the juvenile cell.

Following about a 6 hour clean up of the facility, all inmates were returned to the jail. The exact cause of the fire is under investigation.

## Stolen property recovered

On June 13 and 14, 2001, officers and detectives of the Warm Springs Police Department worked throughout the day and night to recover approximately \$100,000 of stolen property related to several cases throughout the Central Oregon area, including Warm Springs.

Recovered items included a flatbed trailer, all terrain vehicle, snowmobiles, electric and pneumatic tools, hand tools, welding equipment, jewelry, Native American regalia and heirlooms, lawn mowers, stereo equipment, firearms and miscellaneous items. Victor Smith Jr. was arrested in Madras on several counts including felony counts of burglary and theft, after the Warm Springs Police Department provided information concerning his whereabouts. Victor faces several charges in Warm Springs, Jefferson County and Wasco County for the thefts.

While recovering a stolen snowmobile related to the case in Government Camp area, detectives of the Warm Springs Police Department and Clackamas County Sheriff's Department discovered a 43 plant marijuana grow at the residence of Gregory Greenfield. Mr. Greenfield faces several narcotics charges related to the case. Investigation revealed that Greenfield has supplied marijuana to Warm Springs residents in the past. Investigation continues.

## Accident claims Arizona woman

On June 23, 2001, at approximately 7:15 p.m. officers and detectives of the Warm Springs Police Department and emergency medical personnel from Warm Springs Fire and Safety responded to a motor vehicle accident on Highway 3 at milepost 15, which turned fatal.

Several motorists stopped to find a 23-year-old Arizona woman pinned under her vehicle. Officers and emergency medical personnel performed cardio-pulmonary resuscitation while Air Life responded. After approximately 40 minutes the victim was pronounced dead. A three and a half year old child was transported from the scene and admitted to Mountain View Hospital overnight for observation. The child suffered minor injuries and was released the following day.

The names are not being released pending notification of next kin. Speed was a factor in the accident.

# A baby costs \$785 a month.

## How much is your allowance?

If you would like additional information or to get involved in teen pregnancy prevention, contact the Jefferson County Commission on Children and Families at 541-475-4456.