

Oregon's Health CO-OP will be a consumer operated health plan

Have you ever thought, "Wouldn't it be great if I had a say in what my health insurance company looked like?" Now, Oregonians have the opportunity to help shape a consumer-based health CO-OP designed specifically for their needs and operated with member control.

On March 23, 2012, the Department of Health and Human Services notified Oregon's Health CO-OP that it would be awarded the necessary funding to finance a new health plan, approximately \$50 million in loans over the next several years. Unlike a "typical" health insurer this new entity will be a Consumer Oriented and Operated Plan. In 2014 when the Oregon Health Insurance Exchange opens, Oregon's Health CO-OP will offer health insurance that puts the member first, and will be open to any eligible Oregonian wishing

to join.

Oregon's Health CO-OP (incorporated as Community Care of Oregon) will be a not-for-profit insurance entity, with a member-majority operational board.

The formational board includes Ed Blackburn, executive director of Central City Concern, a non-profit agency serving people experiencing homelessness, poverty or addiction; Brian Rohter, co-founder of New Seasons; and Cory Streisinger, former head of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services and Oregon Insurance Commissioner. By 2016 this formational board will be replaced by a member-elected operational board and the CO-OP will be a member-majority governed health insurer.

"This needs to be a uniquely Oregonian health plan that serves our communities and is

governed by real people who use the services it offers," says Rohter.

"We want to offer Oregonians a new option – one that puts the members in control, and engages them in promoting their own health and well-being," says Streisinger.

Oregon's Health CO-OP board has convened an Advisory Committee that includes individuals and leaders from membership organizations representing over 300,000 Oregonians – from small business to labor, from philanthropic foundations to patient advocacy groups. The CO-OP will host a series of community forums where motivated individuals will be encouraged to participate in the process of creating this new membership organization.

"Our hope is to enlist as many interested and motivated Oregonians as possible in the

creation process," says Blackburn. "Anyone interested in learning more about it can go to the website at www.ORHealthCO-OP.org."

"This is a landmark opportunity for Oregonians," says Susan King, executive director of the Oregon Nurses Association, who attended a recent meeting of community advisors. "The new CO-OP is to health insurance, what credit unions are to banks. It's a chance to take charge and help shape your own future. I'm looking forward to seeing broad community involvement as the CO-OP develops and grows."

The CO-OP intends to operate statewide. Membership will be open to all individuals and small businesses in the Oregon Health Insurance Exchange, and eventually may attract membership from large groups. Oregon's Health CO-OP also hopes to serve former Medic-

aid recipients who lose their coverage as their incomes or circumstances change.

CareOregon assisted the board in the loan application submitted to the federal government in October 2011. According to David E. Ford, CEO of CareOregon, "We know there is consumer demand for something new and innovative that centers on greater consumer direction, engagement and transparency."

The Affordable Care Act set aside \$3.3 billion in federal loans as start-up money for CO-OPs. Congress was responding to the public demand for a more responsive and consumer-centered insurance product. The new CO-OPs are intended to launch in every state with the opening of insurance exchanges in 2014.

Studded tires can stay on until Apr. 10

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has extended the studded tire season through Monday, April 9. Statewide weather forecasts call for continued difficult driving conditions in snow zones during the first week in April. Motorists should have their

studded tires removed from their vehicles by 12:01 a.m. on Tuesday, April 10. ODOT encourages drivers to not wait until the deadline if they aren't driving in snowy conditions.

ODOT encourages drivers to consider other types of traction tires or chains. A study completed in 2000 concluded studded tires cause at least \$40 million damage each year on city streets, county roads and state highways. Other types of traction tires are available. These traction tires meet Rubber Manufacturers Association standards for use in severe snow conditions and carry a special symbol on the tire sidewall showing a three-peaked mountain and snowflake. Research shows these tires provide better traction than studded tires when used on bare pavement.

Free child safety seat event in Rainier

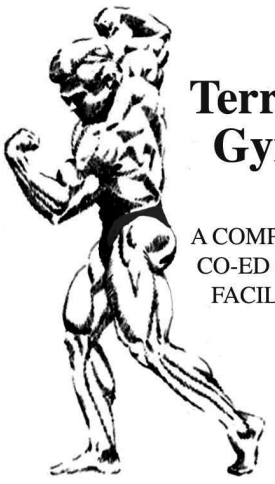
Columbia County Safe Kids will be holding a child safety seat check-up event on Thursday, April 12, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. The free event will be held in Rainier at the CCRider Transit Center, 207 W "B" Street. A certified technician will check to be sure your child has the right seat and that it is installed correctly. They will also check for recalled or expired seats. Through a grant funded by ACTS Oregon, Columbia County Safe Kids can provide low-cost child safety seats to families in need.

Child safety seats and safety belts, when installed and used properly, can prevent injuries and save lives. Young children restrained in child safety seats have an 80 percent lower risk of fatal injury than those who are unrestrained.

The mission of Columbia County Safe Kids is to reduce

unintentional childhood injuries and deaths. For more information, please contact the Commission on Children and Families at 503-397-7211. For infor-

mation about the clinic or the Columbia County child safety seat program, please contact Natalie at 503-410-3169.



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Suicide Hotline	866-397-6161
1-800-784-2433	-----
or	Military Helpline
1-800-273-TALK(8255)	888-HLP-4-VET
	(888-457-4838)