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Last chance to enroll in health insurance and avoid penalty in 2016

(Salem) – The month of January is the last opportunity for Oregonians to enroll in health insurance plans for 2016.

Open enrollment lasts through Jan. 31, 2016. It is the time of year to change plans and, for those who do not have insurance, to buy a plan. If you don't get covered before the deadline, you could go a year without insurance. You could also pay a significant penalty when you file your 2016 taxes. The penalty for not having insurance in 2016 is the *higher* of these two numbers: 2.5 percent of your yearly household income or \$695 for every adult in your family plus \$347.50 for every child under 18.

The penalty could potentially be as much as \$2,085 for a family of four, with two parents and two children younger than 18, earning \$50,000 a year.

Oregonians can sign up, renew, or change their health insurance plans at HealthCare.gov. Even if you were already re-enrolled in your current plan, you can change plans through Jan. 31.

“If the price of your current plan has increased for 2016, it may be worth checking HealthCare.gov to see if you can find a less expensive plan or if you qualify for financial help,” said Patrick Allen, director of the Department of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS), which runs the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace.

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, consumers who shop and switch plans could save an estimated average of \$569 on their 2016 plan.

As of Jan. 2, 2016, 133,776 Oregonians had selected a plan through HealthCare.gov. That number is about 19 percent higher than the approximately 112,000 Oregonians who selected a plan in 2015.

Financial help is available for many people if they enroll through HealthCare.gov. Depending on their income, they may qualify for tax credits to help pay their monthly premium and help with out-of-pocket costs such as deductibles and co-pays. Three out of four Oregonians who used HealthCare.gov last year received tax credits averaging \$199 per month.

Oregon has a network of insurance agents and community organizations ready to help people enroll. You can find an agent or community partner in your area by going to <http://www.oregonhealthcare.gov/get-help.html> or calling the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace at 1-855-268-3767 (toll-free).

DCBS also provided grants to 24 agents to create drop-in enrollment centers during open enrollment. These centers will be open during the entire open enrollment period during normal business hours, with some extended hours. You can find the list of enrollment centers at <http://www.oregonhealthcare.gov/get-help.html>.

To start shopping for plans, visit HealthCare.gov or call 1-800-318-2596 (toll-free) (TTY: 1-855-889-4325).

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The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. DCBS houses both the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace and the Division of Financial Regulation. For more information, go to dcbs.oregon.gov.