April 3, 2014

Historic 1st Enrollment Period of the Affordable Care Act: Brief Extension Announced.

What does this mean for our community?

<u>"I missed the deadline of March 31. What now?"</u>

If you missed open enrollment or didn't complete your application you'll likely see a penalty on your 2014 taxes. However, Covered California announced on March 31, "Record-setting numbers of people trying to sign up for Covered California health insurance plans overwhelmed the system on the final day of open enrollment, prompting the exchange to allow customers who had trouble enrolling by the deadline to work with a certified delegate to finish their application by April 15."

This is great news if you want to get covered by the end of the extension period, but didn't finish your application or had trouble getting the application started. After April 15, there are some qualifying life events that could make you, or members of your family, eligible outside of the regular open enrollment period. Also, if you are eligible for Medi-Cal, you can apply anytime and you should apply as soon as you are able to avoid potential tax penalties and to access health care services you are eligible for.

<u>Open Door Assisting our Community</u>

Open Door Community Health Centers' Member Services staff is available to assist you. "Contact us as soon as possible so we can assist you with completing your application before the 15th," Recommends Andrea Page, an Open Door Member Services Specialist in Humboldt County. "Many of the community members we have assisted have been successful in finding a health insurance plan through www.CoveredCA.com, or have been signed up for another program to help them avoid a penalty."

Contact the Member Services Department at Open Door to make an appointment for application assistance or to learn more about your options. Staff members are available to assist by appointment, and appointments are made on a first come first serve basis. Walk-ins cannot be accommodated at this time. Call or email:

- Del Norte (707) 465-1988
- Humboldt (707) 269-7073
- email memberservices@opendoorhealth.com

Patricia Black, an Open Door Member Services Specialist in Del Norte County comments, "We have been so encouraged to see how expanded Medi-Cal has helped so many adults who previously did not qualify, and also the amount of assistance that was offered to make the premiums actually affordable. We want people to know that we will continue to be available to assist them through Covered California to apply for Medi-Cal, to report changes, or to apply during special enrollment periods created by life changing

events such as getting married, having a baby, experiencing a change in income, or moving into the state."

Open Door was one of the few community agencies to become a Covered California Certified Enrollment Entity, with 13 Open Door staff trained as Certified Enrollment Counselors (CEC) in Del Norte and Humboldt Counties to assist Open Door patients and community members in applying for insurance through www.coveredCA.com.

During the 6 month open enrollment period from October 1, 2013-March 31, 2014, Open Door CEC's assisted over 500 families in applying for health coverage through www.CoveredCA.com and over 800 additional families in applying for Medi-Cal directly through Del Norte or Humboldt County offices of Department of Human Health and Human Services.

"Open Door's dedicated Member Services staff has worked tirelessly to assist as many community members as possible. We did our best to prepare for a process that was new for everyone involved. Now, we have the experience to build strategies to be even more successful for the next open enrollment period in Fall 2014," said Member Services Director Breanne Olmstead. "This past enrollment period we focused our capacity to assist Open Door patients and those who found us through the www.CoveredCA.com website. Though the first enrollment period for the Affordable Care Act has officially ended, we still have our work cut out for us to help our community get covered! Our initial next steps are to help as many people as possible with finishing their application by April 15th . We will continue to assist with Medi-Cal and CalFresh applications all year, and we encourage people who are unsure about their eligibility to call us so we can help determine what the best next steps are. We look forward to hearing from you."

For more information contact the Member Services Department at Open Door memberservices@opendoorhealth.com