

News

New Britain's Community Health Center offering assistance with Obamacare enrollment application process

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By SCOTT WHIPPLE
STAFF WRITER

NEW BRITAIN — The Community Health Center, Inc. is hosting an Affordable Care Act enrollment fair today for patients and non-patients at its 85 Lafayette St. location as the application process for the national health care initiative formally opens.

“Our fully trained staff is gearing up for the launch of the Affordable Care Act,” said CHC Communications Director Eliza Cole.

CHC is scheduling uninsured people to visit its city office to open the enrollment process. To date, Cole says the center has more than 16 patients scheduled starting at 3 p.m. and running until 7 p.m. and it is scheduling more patients. For information about enrollment or CHC, call Cole at (860) 262-2546 or visit www.chc1.com.

Connecticut's health insurance marketplace is urging consumers to compare plans and sign up online, but the request to file on the Internet poses challenges for some, even in one of the nation's wealthiest states.

A survey of 596 residents conducted for the marketplace this year found that 6 percent had no access to the Internet. And Jason Madrak, chief marketing officer for the exchange, said many in lower-income ranges don't own computers but instead go online through smartphones, which aren't considered ideal for browsing the website and filling out applications.

As open enrollment in the marketplace begins today, a team of outreach workers will be in the community with laptops to help tech-challenged enrollees apply for coverage. Officials estimate that the workers — known as navigators and assisters — speak more than 30 different languages.

“If we're going to go ahead and push folks to really use the online application, then we need to make sure they have access to those machines,” Madrak said.

To make the technology more available, the marketplace, known as Access Health CT, is planning to open a storefront at Main and Court streets in New Britain, where construction continues, in a few weeks. Locations in New Haven and other cities will follow, where consumers will have access to computers and receive expert guidance. The marketplace, also called an exchange, is also planning a large number of mobile enrollment events, where mini enrollment centers will be set up in communities along with three or four outreach workers and laptops.

Trained staff members at the Community Health Center will be on hand today to assist patients through the process and answer any questions they may have. Each application takes approximately an hour and 20 minutes. CHC has been a leading health care provider in the state since 1972.

"We have been building a world-class primary health care system committed to caring for uninsured and underserved populations," Cole explained.

CHC is focused on improving health outcomes for its more than 130,000 patients as well as building healthy communities. Recognized as both a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Home by the National Committee for Quality Assurance and a Primary Care Medical Home by The Joint Commission, CHC delivers service in more than 200 locations statewide. It offers primary care in medical, dental and behavioral health services.

Access Health CT has a target of enrolling about 100,000 people in the first year of the program. Open enrollment runs from Tuesday through March 31. Coverage begins Jan. 1.

An Associated Press report was included in this story.

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If You Go

What: Affordable Care Act enrollment fair

When: Today 3 to 7 p.m.

Where: Community Health Center, Inc., 85 Lafayette St.

Info: For information about enrollment or CHC, call Cole at (860) 262-2546 or visit www.chc1.com.

URL: <http://www.newbritainherald.com/articles/2013/09/30/news/doc524a16153a08a362061455.prt>

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