

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 East Boulevard Avenue – Department 325, Bismarck ND 58505-0250**

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Contacts: Heather Steffl, Public Information Manager, 701-328-4933, or LuWanna Lawrence, Public Information Officer, 701-328-1892

Agency Provides Update on new Medicaid Expansion Program

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services issued an update today on its efforts to implement the Medicaid Expansion including contract negotiations with insurance carriers and strategies to enroll and ensure applicants have health care coverage beginning January 2014.

Approved by North Dakota lawmakers and authorized by the Affordable Care Act, the expansion makes Medicaid health care coverage available to qualifying low-income individuals under age 65 who have incomes up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level, which is an annual income of about \$16,000 for a household of one and \$21,000 for a household of two. The expansion opens the program to adults without dependent children and low-income parents who, in general, were not previously eligible.

Lawmakers directed the department to implement the expansion through private insurance carriers or the federal Health Insurance Marketplace. The department issued a request for proposal Aug. 5, 2013, and responses were due Oct. 8, 2013. Proposals were received from Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota and Sanford Health Plan.

On Nov. 13, 2013, the department issued a Notice of Intent to award contracts to both insurers. Late yesterday, Blue Cross officials notified the department that Blue Cross was withdrawing its proposal.

Department Executive Director Maggie Anderson said, “We will continue to move forward with implementation of the Medicaid Expansion coverage with Sanford Health Plan. As part of the request for proposal, bidders had to assure the department that they would meet the state’s provider network requirements to assure access to services statewide.”

The department continues to work to assure applicants have health care coverage beginning Jan. 1, 2014. Anderson said this has been challenging due to delays in the development of federal and state technology systems for determining eligibility and exchanging information between the federal Health Insurance Marketplace and state Medicaid programs. She said the federal marketplace Healthcare.gov is providing North Dakota with limited information on applicants they assess as qualifying for Medicaid. The state has received incomplete information on about 1,093 applications involving 1,613 individuals.

The federal government is allowing North Dakota and other states to enroll individuals who applied for coverage through Healthcare.gov and were assessed as Medicaid eligible, to be enrolled in Medicaid coverage for up to 90 days, while more information is gathered to determine if they qualify.

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Without this option, it is doubtful that some applicants would have coverage starting Jan. 1, 2014, Anderson said. People who do not qualify for Medicaid must apply for private coverage on the federal marketplace by Dec. 23, 2013, if they want coverage effective Jan. 1, 2014. Open enrollment on the federal marketplace continues through March 15, 2014. North Dakota's Medicaid Expansion has no enrollment deadline.

The department has estimated that about 20,500 North Dakotans may qualify for Medicaid Expansion coverage. North Dakotans can apply online at <http://apply.dhs.nd.gov>, by phone at 1-855-794-7308, or by completing a paper application and submitting it to the department or a county social service office.

North Dakota's Medicaid Expansion coverage differs from the regular Medicaid program because coverage is through managed care organizations, eligibility is based on a household's modified adjusted gross income, and assets are not counted. Details are online at www.nd.gov/dhs/medicaidexpansion.

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