

Legacy institutions mobilize community for affordable health insurance

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr., Contributing Writer
Thursday, 06 March 2014 14:14



Stairstep Foundation, Minneapolis Urban League, NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center, Southside Community Health Services and Pillsbury United Communities are collaborating in an omnibus outreach initiative to insure that African Americans can get the affordable health insurance they need through the state MNsure Health Insurance Exchange.

For many, a critical deadline for mandated health insurance coverage is fast approaching and the legacy leadership and community organizations are working hard to inform and enroll people affected by the deadline, while allaying the fears of those who need and are eligible for subsidized insurance and who are not affected by the deadline.

As mandated by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), or as it became known, Obamacare, all U.S. residents must enroll in a health plan by March 31 to avoid a financial penalty.



That penalty does not apply to low-income residents who qualify for programs such as MinnesotaCare or Medical Assistance. If a person has completed the MNsure application and was told he or she qualifies for Medical Assistance or MinnesotaCare that person does not need to do anything else and will receive further information in the mail that will either confirm coverage or describe if there are any additional things needed.

Though the process to sign up for health coverage through MNsure, the state's insurance exchange, has been frustrating for some, the people at MNsure say they are doing everything imaginable to get everyone successfully enrolled.

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As thousands of Minnesotans obtain health insurance coverage through MNsure – many securing coverage for the first time – a number of questions arise ranging from eligibility and payments to coverage options and provider networks. MNsure is reminding Minnesotans about the various resources available to help get those questions answered.

The legacy leadership organizations have hired “navigators” to assist people who either don’t have the Internet or are having Web-enrollment issues. Navigators (or assisters, as they are referred to on MNsure’s website) are on hand at the agencies and Twin Cities churches participating in Stairstep Foundation’s “His Works United” ecumenical outreach and engagement initiative.

Minneapolis Urban League on February 28th hosted a *Conversations with Al McFarlane* Town Hall Meeting on MNsure, convening legacy organizations and navigators to announce specific strategies of stakeholder agencies, and to announce a series of Mass Meetings at Twin Cities churches to mobilize, organize and enroll residents in affordable health insurance plans through MNsure. The contact persons for the African American Outreach effort are:

TaMica’ Tody

MNsure Navigator Coordinator
Stairstep Foundation
1404 14th Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
Office: 612-521-3110
Cell: 952-452-1322
tamica@stairstep.org

Marcel Lynn

MNsure Navigator
NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center
1313 Penn Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
Office: 612-543-2615
Cell: 612-239-2392
marcel.lynn@hennepin.us

Adair Mosley

Chief of Staff
Pillsbury United Communities
125 West Broadway Suite 130
Minneapolis, MN 55411
612-302-3400

Heidi R. Benson

Q Health Connections
East Metro Outreach Manager
Southside Community Health Services

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4243 South 4th Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55409
Office: 612-821-2006
heidi.benson@southsidechs.org

Angela Williams

MNSure Recruiter Outreach
Minneapolis Urban League
2100 Plymouth Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
Office: 612-302-3100
Cell: 763-777-0925
awilliams@mul.org

The Town Hall Meeting and the scheduled Mass Meetings are being captured for television and radio cablecasts and broadcasts regionally on BMA Comcast Channel 937, on SPNN Television in St. Paul and on MTN in Minneapolis, and on the Conversations with Al McFarlane radio program on KFAI. The Mass Meetings announced were:

New Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church

3019 17th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55407
Saturday, March 15, 2014
10:00am - 2:00pm

Kwanzaa Community Church

3700 Bryant Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55412
Sunday, March 16, 2014
1:00pm - 3:30pm

Joint Heirs With Christ Faith International

500 Newton Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55411
Sunday, March 16, 2014
3:30pm - 4:30pm

Minneapolis Central Church of Christ

1922 4th Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55405
Informational Session:
Wednesday, March 19, 2014
6:00 -7:00 pm
Enrollment Event:
Saturday, March 22, 2014
10:00 am - 2:00 pm

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Sanctuary Community Covenant Church

1201 37th Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55412
Sunday, March 23, 2014
1:00pm - 4:00pm

Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

2600 East 38th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406
Wednesday, March 26, 2014
5:30pm - 7:00pm

In St. Paul navigators are available at Planned Parenthood, Neighborhood House, Hmong American Partnership, the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living and the Family Tree Clinic.

If someone purchased a Qualified Health Plan through MNSure and has questions about what is covered, doctor networks, or billing, he or she is encouraged to contact that insurance company's customer service department.

For Blue Cross Blue Shield the numbers are (651) 662-5030 or (800) 531-6685.

For HealthPartners call (952) 967-7540 or (866) 232-1166.

To reach Medica, call (888) 592-8211.

For PreferredOne the number is (763) 847-4477 or (800) 997-1750.

For UCare the numbers are (612) 676-6600 or (877) 903-0070.

For questions regarding MinnesotaCare or Medical Assistance call Minnesota Health Care Programs Member Help Desk at (651) 431-2670 or (800) 657-3739.

MNSure Contact Center Hours are from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Monday – Friday and 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Saturday. Account creation and application access is available online between 6 a.m. and midnight every day.