

The Salt Lake Tribune

Number of uninsured Utahns remained flat in 2012

Health insurance • The Affordable Care Act, which goes live Tuesday, promises to drastically reduce the uninsured rate.

BY KIRSTEN STEWART

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

PUBLISHED: SEPTEMBER 30, 2013 12:49PM

UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 30, 2013 03:51PM

Utah's uninsured rate remains virtually unchanged from last year, according to a report by the Utah Department of Health.

An estimated 376,600 Utahns, or 13.2 percent of the population, went without health coverage in 2012, compared to 377,700 in 2011.

The state's estimate, culled from a telephone survey, is lower than estimates provided by the U.S. Census. New Census data indicate 417,274 Utahns had no health insurance last year.

"But the story is the same," said Lincoln Nehring, a health policy analyst at Voices for Utah Children. "We have way too many uninsured children and adults in the state and we have not been able to reduce that number under the status quo."

The Affordable Care Act, which promises to drastically reduce the uninsured rate, goes live on Tuesday with the launch of online insurance marketplaces, or exchanges, in each state.

Whether it succeeds could hinge on the affordability of plans offered. Utahns got their first peek at prices on Monday with the release of rates by the state Insurance Department.

A good chunk of Utah's uninsured, however, would qualify for Medicaid if the state were among those choosing to expand the safety net. Gov. Gary Herbert is still weighing the costs and benefits and hopes to make a decision in the coming months.

State health department chief David Patton hopes the uninsured data helps the state "better target [its] efforts as we all work toward a common goal of reducing the number of Utahns who go without health insurance."

Patton also encouraged families with uninsured children to look into Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to see if they qualify.

Highlights from the new data:

- 48,200 of Utah's uninsured are children from low-income families who qualify for Medicaid or CHIP.
- 185,900 of the state's uninsured live at or below 138 percent of the federal poverty level and would qualify for Medicaid under an expansion of the safety net program.
- There was a slight drop in the number of uninsured young adults between ages 19 and 26.
- Among self-employed Utahns, 26.1 percent reported being uninsured in 2012.

To read the full report, go to: <http://1.usa.gov/16DiXzl>.

© Copyright 2013 The Salt Lake Tribune. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.