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Help sessions set Tuesday for Utah's new insurance exchange

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Voices for Utah Children is holding an open house Tuesday at the Sorenson Unity Center, offering help to families signing up for coverage on Utah's new insurance exchange.

The open house, offered in partnership with Salt Lake City, is scheduled to continue until 8 p.m. at the center, 1383 South 900 West in Salt Lake City.

Created by the Affordable Care Act, the [healthcare.gov](http://healthcare.gov) online health insurance marketplace, or exchange, launched Tuesday.

"This is an important day for Utah families who struggle with the cost of coverage and health care," said Karen Crompton, president and CEO of Voices for Utah Children, in a statement. "Today's event is designed to help families learn about their new health insurance options and to get signed up for coverage."

Shoppers on the exchange have until Dec. 15 to sign up for coverage that begins on January 1.

Open enrollment continues through March 31, 2014.

Tax credits are available to individuals and families with incomes below 400 percent of the federal poverty level — \$94,200 for a family of four.

The new marketplace program "creates the opportunity for affordable coverage, and peace of mind, for the uninsured in our community," said Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker in a statement.

Starting in November, families will be able to sign up for Utah's Medicaid and CHIP programs on the marketplace, not just commercial coverage.

Most of Utah's uninsured children are already eligible for CHIP or Medicaid, but their parents just don't know it. Parents can apply online at [www.insurekidsnow.gov](http://www.insurekidsnow.gov).

Rep. Angela Romero, D-Salt Lake City, added in the statement: "If you know parents at work, from the PTA, at your place of worship, the YMCA, your neighborhood association or book club, or your kids' sports leagues, encourage them to spread the word."

Organized efforts to find and enroll eligible but uninsured kids will continue, she noted. “But similar organized efforts in the past have not reached all eligible children, and there is no substitute for good, old-fashioned, family-to-family, neighbor-to-neighbor, and friend-to-friend communications.”

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