

Missouri's Adds New High Risk Health Pool

July 15, 2010

New pre-existing condition health insurance plan now accepting applications

\$81 million in federal money will fund new pool

Jefferson City, Mo. - Insurance Director John M. Huff says Missourians with pre-existing medical conditions can now apply for a new high-risk health insurance pool. Missouri Health Insurance Pool (MHIP) will be operating a new high-risk pool subsidized by \$81 million in federal funding. The program is part of the national health care reform law.

The federal funding allows Missourians with pre-existing conditions to buy health insurance at competitive rates. When these consumers try to buy individual health insurance policies, they're often rejected or offered a much higher rate because of their health status.

Huff encourages interested consumers to apply immediately: "This federal funding is limited, and no state tax money will go into this pool. The only other source of revenue will be the premiums paid by consumers themselves."

Under state law, the director of insurance serves on the MHIP Board of Directors and appoints the members.

To be eligible for the new high-risk pool, consumers must be Missouri residents, have a pre-existing medical condition and be uninsured for at least six months. The high-risk pool will be available until 2014, when the new federal law requires health insurance companies to offer coverage to all applicants, regardless of health status, at standard market rates.

MHIP has contracted with RightChoice, a subsidiary of Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, to administer the program and Catalyst Rx to provide prescription drug coverage.

This new pool will be the second operated by MHIP in Missouri. Since 1991, MHIP has run a high-risk pool for Missourians, established by state law. The pool has more than 4,000 members. That pool is funded by premiums paid by policyholders and by fees assessed on health insurance companies operating in Missouri.

Consumers can apply online for insurance coverage in mid-July at mhip.org or by calling 1-800-821-2231.

About the Missouri Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions & Professional Registration

The Missouri Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration (DIFP) is responsible for consumer protection through the regulation of financial industries and professionals. The department's seven divisions work to enforce state regulations both efficiently and effectively while encouraging a competitive environment for industries and professions to ensure consumers have access to quality products.