

Special Audio Report Transcript

Headline: After the Big Deadline, a Push to Sign Up Individuals Who Are Still Eligible

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The giant push to sign people up for Covered California by the end of the first open enrollment period is over. But the exchange and health care advocates aren't just sitting back. Their new focus is making sure people who meet certain criteria know that they can still get coverage. This is an audio report for *California Healthline*, a daily news service of the California HealthCare Foundation. I'm Rachel Dornhelm.

SFX phone ringing "Family Resource Center."

With the Covered California enrollment deadline looming in March, the Oakland school district's Central Family Resource Center was flooded with calls, like this one.

SFX Hi, how can I help you?

Thanks to a big outreach effort, many parents called or came into the center for the first time during the sign-up effort. Eliza Schiffrin is the center's coordinator. She says many people who still haven't come in may be eligible for Medi-Cal or the county program HealthPAC. She hopes they are not dissuaded by the constant talk about the March 31st deadline.

(Schiffrin): "That's great. That got a lot of people in, and at the same time we want to be promoting that the most important thing is people's health -- and that that's something that goes on all the time, and we're here to support that."

The executive director of Health Access California, Anthony Wright, pointed out that the exchange is still taking in "special circumstance" enrollees.

(Wright): "We are concerned that there are some folks who may think that with all of the attention on the close of open enrollment, that there are no other options for enrollment until November -- but again, depending on income and depending on life circumstances, there are those options."

By life circumstances, he means leaving a job, getting married or divorced, adopting or birthing a child and... graduation.

(Wright): "We expect that there will be lots of enrollments in the months of May and June when high school and college students graduate, because that has been traditionally a major moment when people become uninsured."

Young people leave campus-based plans, he says, or in some cases their parents' insurance. Enter the group Young Invincibles. Linda Leu, the California Policy Director, says the group advocates for good policy for 18-34 year-olds. She says they'll be doing outreach around graduation, but they'll also focus on other triggers, as well.

(Leu): "Young adults are going to be the ones that are really well-represented in almost all of these qualifying life events, I mean 18-34 is a prime age for having babies, getting married certainly 18-34 year-olds have a high rate of getting married."

Leu says California did anticipate some of the need to educate people, especially in the beginning about when they can sign up for the health exchange outside of open enrollment. She points to AB792 -- a bill passed in 2012 that requires courts to notify people about the exchange when they file for divorce, marriage or when they adopt a child. It also requires the state to provide notices to people who are disenrolled that they might be eligible for Medi-Cal or Covered California.

That's a point that Kelly Hardy, senior director of health policy at Children Now, is excited about.

(Hardy): "Half of all California kids are enrolled in Medi-Cal, so that's over 4.5 million kids enrolled in Medi-Cal, and there is no deadline for enrollment, that can happen anytime throughout the year."

She says that over 250,000 kids were enrolled from October through mid-February through the Covered California website, thanks to an unprecedented effort by community organizations and through social media.

Ken Jacobs is the chair of the UC-Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education. They are contracted to do modeling for Covered California about how health insurance needs will change in the new system. Jacobs says just those who will become eligible by losing coverage, say by leaving a job, is around half a million Californians a year.

(Jacobs): "We are talking significant numbers of people who will become eligible over the course of the year due to one of those life triggers. So it's going to be very important to reach out to make sure they understand they can enroll and to reach them when they do experience that life trigger, because it only opens for a period of

time. For a window, so we need to make sure people are reached within that window."

Jacobs says with the initial deadline passed, now attention can turn to the best way to extend coverage to those in transition.

This has been an audio report for *California Healthline*, a daily news service of the California HealthCare Foundation. If you have feedback or other issues you'd like to have addressed, please email us at CHL@CHCF.org. I'm Rachel Dornhelm, thanks for listening.