

Governor Phil Murphy



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Governor Murphy Requests Federal Government Re-Open Affordable Care Act Enrollment in New Jersey in Response to COVID-19

03/15/2020

TRENTON – Responding to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Phil Murphy today requested the federal government open a Special Enrollment Period (SEP) in New Jersey to allow uninsured and underinsured residents to enroll in health coverage through the federal health insurance exchange.

The Governor's request was issued in a letter sent to U.S. Department Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma.

"With COVID-19 now a pandemic and confirmed cases increasing in New Jersey and across the country, it is imperative that we take all appropriate actions to increase access to screening, testing, and treatment related to COVID-19. While I have coordinated across state agencies to take emergency action to facilitate access to screening, testing and access to care for the residents of New Jersey, more can be done to ensure every individual has access to appropriate health care during this crisis," **Governor Murphy wrote**. "Therefore, as New Jersey transitions from a State Based Exchange on the Federal Platform to a State Based Exchange, I respectfully urge the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to authorize a Special Enrollment Period in New Jersey to allow individuals to access affordable health insurance options through the federal platform."

Several states that operate a State-Based Exchange have already established a Special Enrollment Period in response to COVID-19. However, federal action is required for the establishment of an SEP in states that operate on the federal platform, Healthcare.gov. Governor Murphy is calling for a special enrollment period of at least 60 days for all eligible uninsured and underinsured persons to purchase health coverage through the federal platform, and for that coverage to be in place as soon as possible.

"With no vaccine in place and a high degree of uncertainty about the direction that the virus will take, increasing access to health coverage will play a role in managing this outbreak. Similar to actions CMS has taken in the past during major weather events such as hurricanes, creating a SEP is a responsible action that will benefit individuals, as well as contribute to the management of this public health crisis," **added Governor Murphy**.

"As the state responds to the COVID-19 situation, we want to ensure that residents have the coverage they need to access testing and treatment if necessary. We have taken action to require carriers regulated by the state to waive cost sharing for COVID-19 testing. However we can do more and, in this case, we need the federal government's assistance," **said Department of Banking and Insurance Commissioner Marlene Caride**. "Clearly, we do not want residents to be apprehensive about seeking treatment because they are not insured or concerned about medical bills. We are asking the federal government to establish a special enrollment period for our residents, and for that coverage to be in place as soon as possible."

U.S. Senator Bob Menendez and 24 of his colleagues recently sent a letter requesting a Special Enrollment Period for consumers in response to COVID-19. Senator Menendez and U.S. Senator Cory Booker also introduced legislation to support the response to the pandemic including to create a special enrollment period for individuals impacted by COVID-19, among other initiatives. The Governor's letter may be found here (http://d31hzlhk6di2h5.cloudfront.net/20200315/8f/63/22/fb/f333ac94f2e2ebf477b14898/Governor_Murphy_Letter_to_Secretary_Azar_and_Administrator_Verma_0)

For the latest information on novel coronavirus, please visit www.nj.gov/health (<https://www.nj.gov/health/>) or call 1-800-222-1222 or 1-800-962-1253 (if using out-of-state phone line).

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