



Ted Strickland, Governor
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Ohio Department of Insurance and St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy Holding March 18th Outreach Event for the Uninsured

National Cover the Uninsured Week is March 14-20

COLUMBUS —The Ohio Department of Insurance and the St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy are holding an educational outreach event during National Cover the Uninsured Week (March 14-20) aimed to create awareness about the reforms being made to the private health insurance marketplace in the state, to share information on the federal reform efforts and to discuss the important services free pharmacies and clinics can provide those without insurance in need of healthcare. The public event will run from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m. at the St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy, located at 1125 Bank St in Cincinnati.

Currently, about 1.3 million Ohioans, a total of 12 percent of the state's population, lack health insurance. Recently enacted legislation signed by Governor Strickland will enable an estimated 109,000 more Ohioans access to health insurance over the next three years. The initial reforms include a rate-cap on certain individual coverage, extending the dependent age, extending mini-COBRA continuation coverage and permitting small business employees to use pre-tax dollars to secure health coverage.

"The good news is that even in these difficult times, we can make changes to improve access to coverage for some Ohioans," Director Hudson said. "We have a responsibility for the economic well-being and health of our state to take action and continue to push forward." The Department-led Health Care Coverage and Quality Council's (HCCQC) payment reform, medical homes, consumer engagement and health information technology task forces continue to develop reform strategies. You can follow the Council's efforts at www.healthcarereform.ohio.gov.

While systemic change is underway, people who are sick and living in poverty today cannot wait until this change is complete. Without free clinics and charitable pharmacies, people who are uninsured and unable to afford care will most likely go to hospital emergency rooms, the most costly form of care. The end result is higher health care costs for everyone.

In December, the retail value of the prescriptions dispensed by the Charitable Pharmacy hit the \$5 million mark since opening its doors in September 2006. "We've experienced a doubling in the volume of prescriptions filled from one year to the next, which is an indicator of how many people in the region are struggling during these tough economic times," said Liz Carter, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul. "We serve as the pharmacy of last resort for people who have no other way to get their prescriptions filled – that's a unique safety for our community's uninsured," she added.

More detailed information about these reform efforts and health coverage options can be found on the Department's web site at www.insurance.ohio.gov. Ohio insurance consumers are encouraged to contact the Department at 1-800-686-1526 for help securing health insurance. **Those with questions about care for the uninsured and about Free Clinics should call 614-221-6494 and visit www.ohiofreeclinics.org.**

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MEDIA NOTE: Media are urged to attend to talk with health insurance and health care subject matters experts and with the uninsured.