



Wednesday, July 14, 2010
Contact: Laura Smith, Office of the Governor, 608-261-2162

Governor Doyle Announces Health Insurance Option Available for People with Pre-existing Conditions

MADISON - Governor Jim Doyle today announced a new health insurance option is now available for people with pre-existing conditions. Wisconsin's Health Insurance Risk-Sharing Plan (HIRSP) will begin taking applications tomorrow, July 15, 2010 and coverage under the plan will begin on August 1, 2010.

"Denying access to health insurance to the people who might need it the most simply does not make any sense," Governor Doyle said. "This new benefit will provide relief to thousands of Wisconsinites who have struggled to find affordable health insurance."

The Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act signed into law by President Obama established a program for states to establish high risk pools to serve adults with pre-existing medical conditions who have been uninsured for at least six months. Wisconsin HIRSP is providing a bridge for those with pre-existing conditions until 2014, when such exclusions will become a thing of the past and individuals will be able to buy coverage through health insurance exchanges.

The new HIRSP option is a statewide program that will provide comprehensive health care to people that have been denied insurance due to a pre-existing condition. The program is funded through individual premiums and a federal financial subsidy. Wisconsin expects to receive \$73 million out of \$5 billion allocated nationwide over three years. People who may be eligible are encouraged to sign up as soon as possible because applications will be processed on a first-come, first-serve basis until the subsidy runs out. It is expected that about 8,000 individuals will be covered. Wisconsin has developed its program and negotiated rates with providers so that we will be able to cover more people, dollar for dollar, than many other states.

Under Governor Doyle's leadership, Wisconsin has built one of the best systems of health care access through BadgerCare Plus, BadgerCare Plus Core, SeniorCare and FamilyCare. Wisconsin is now America's health care leader, ranking first for health care quality, second in access to coverage, and providing health care access to every child. Governor Doyle has also positioned Wisconsin as a leader in e-health and quality initiatives. National health reform builds on Wisconsin's health care successes and will bring \$750-980 million in additional federal funding to the state, providing real relief to Wisconsin taxpayers.

Governor Doyle created the Office of Health Care Reform to be led by the Secretary of the Department of Health Services and the Commissioner of Insurance. Governor Doyle directed the Office to develop a plan that uses national health care reform to build on Wisconsin's successful efforts and existing programs; directed that the Office ensure that Wisconsin's residents and businesses realize the benefits of national health care reform; and directed the Office to pursue federal grants to assist in developing a health insurance exchange and implementing any other aspects of health care reform.

For general information about HIRSP and the new HIRSP Federal Plan please visit www.hirsp.org or call HIRSP Customer Service at 1-888-253-2698. For more information on the benefits of national health care reform and Wisconsin's implementation efforts, visit: www.healthcarereform.wisconsin.gov.