

## Covered California announces enrollment figures for Fresno

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Covered California Executive Director Peter Lee talks about the approaching Feb. 15 enrollment deadline at the California Health Collaborative in Fresno. Covered California stopped in Fresno today as part of its statewide tour promoting the final weeks of this year's open-enrollment period for health insurance.

Agency executives made stops at the California Health Collaborative and the Health Insurance Exchange in Fresno today and encouraged local insurers and health organizations to continue working with residents through the Feb. 15 deadline.

"It takes that on-the-ground work to make a difference," said Peter Lee, Covered California executive director. "Health insurance is still complicated so meeting with someone in person is something we're promoting and we're seeing it happen throughout the state."

Statewide more than 273,000 Californians have already signed up during this year's open enrollment period, he said. Of that number, 2,600 live in Fresno and 4,600 are Fresno County residents. While these numbers are lower than last year, Lee said the drop off was to be expected following the Affordable Care Act's historic first year in 2013.

The agency is hoping to get the word out and enroll as many people as possible before this month's deadline.

"If you don't get coverage this year and can afford it, you'll have to pay a penalty when filing your 2015 taxes," Lee said.

That penalty is set to double this year, and Californians without health care coverage will have to pay either \$325 per

household member or 2 percent of their annual income, whichever is greater of the two.

During last year's inaugural enrollment period, Covered California enrolled more than 3.4 million residents throughout the state. Lee said that the agency has retained a majority of those residents and is looking to target last year's holdouts who still don't think they can afford health care coverage.

"The challenge is that many of them have never had coverage before and they just never believed that they'd be able to afford it," he said. "However, we've seen people be amazed that they can sign up for an insurance plan and pay as little as \$20 or \$35 a month."

More than 800,000 households received financial help after signing up through Covered California last year, with an average subsidy of \$5,200 per family, he said.

In addition to spreading the message that health insurance is affordable, Lee said the agency has revised many of its physician directories to more accurately display insurance coverage information. Outdated information was one of the main problems the agency faced following last year's enrollment period.

Covered California estimates that its local community partners will host more than 500 enrollment events throughout the state before the Feb. 15 deadline.

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