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\$400,000 grant to help consumers navigate health insurance

(Salem) — A \$400,000 federal grant will further enhance Oregon's efforts to make health insurance more accessible to Oregonians.

The Department of Consumer and Business Services received the grant today from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of the federal health reform bill. The grant money will allow the department to provide consumers with a central source for information and assistance with health insurance.

"Consumers need help figuring out which program best fits their needs or who to turn to with questions about health care reform or their insurance policy," said Teresa Miller, administrator of the department's Insurance Division.

For example, consumers may have to turn to a different program depending on whether they need help resolving a problem with an insurance company or the Oregon Health plan, need help with Medicare, or need help finding insurance if they have a serious medical condition.

The department will collaborate with the Oregon Health Authority and various nonprofit organizations to implement the grant. The grant funds will allow the department to:

- Create a one-stop shop for consumers to get information on health insurance and connect to the right program.
- Catalogue the array of government and non-profit health programs and who they serve.
- Provide outreach on insurance options to hard-to-reach and disproportionately uninsured populations.
- Help consumers with language, literacy, or other barriers to complete insurance appeals paperwork, file complaints, or enroll in a health plan.

"In addition to helping consumers directly, the resources will be helpful to state agencies, insurance company customer service staff, insurance agents, and non-profit organizations that work daily with Oregonians who are trying to navigate health insurance," Miller said.

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