



STATE OF NEW YORK | EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
DAVID A. PATERSON | GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR PATERSON ANNOUNCES PROGRAM TO OFFER AFFORDABLE HEALTH INSURANCE IN CENTRAL NEW YORK

*Central New York Program Offers Small Businesses and Individuals Insurance Premiums
70 Percent Lower Than Average*

*Subsidiary of Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce Selected to Administer Healthy
NY Pilot Project*

Governor David A. Paterson today announced a Syracuse-based company has been selected to run the first Upstate Healthy NY pilot project, which will provide affordable health insurance to small businesses and individuals in Central New York. Benefits Specialists, a subsidiary of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, will administer the program which will offer premiums with discounts as high as 70 percent, and will work to increase enrollment through outreach and education initiatives. In existing programs, Healthy NY offers premiums nearly 38 percent lower than those of average small businesses, and even greater discounts for sole proprietors and individuals.

“We must continue our work to make New York the best place for business, and there has never been more important than during this economic crisis,” said Governor Paterson. “By offering low cost health insurance to small businesses and individuals, Healthy NY helps make New York competitive so that we can attract and retain great employees and employers. I am pleased that Benefits Specialists will take the lead on this pilot project in Central New York.”

While the average small business health insurance premium costs \$400 per person per month, Benefits Specialists will offer Healthy NY packages for close to 70 percent less, starting as low as \$121.79 per person per month. For individuals, Benefits Specialists will offer premiums that cost as much as \$878 less than average individual rates.

Healthy NY is a cost effective program that makes health coverage affordable. For every dollar that New York spends on Healthy NY, four are generated: \$3 in premiums from businesses and individuals who would not otherwise have health insurance and \$1 in matching federal funds. Healthy NY currently has 155,000 enrollees. New York spent \$130 million on the program in the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

New York’s first Healthy NY pilot project began in Brooklyn with HealthWorks under the administration of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. This success inspired the project’s application to a region Upstate. HealthWorks has offered Healthy NY coverage packages since 2005 and now serves 368 small businesses.

Insurance Superintendent Eric R. Dinallo said: “We must find cost-effective ways to provide health insurance to the many New Yorkers who now face the hazards of living without it. Healthy NY is a program designed to assist small businesses and working individuals. We are pleased to be working with the Syracuse business community on this pilot project to help businesses in Central New York.”

President of Benefit Specialists Paul Muoio said: “The pilot project represents a great opportunity for the uninsured to obtain affordable health care. In addition, the project will help individuals and businesses better understand how to navigate the health care system, and to protect not only their health but also their financial assets. Educational programs will be an integral aspect of the project.”

Senator David J. Valesky said: “Small businesses are the core of the Upstate economy, and have been put at great risk in this economic crisis. The Healthy NY program can alleviate burdensome health care costs for small business owners and their employees, and I am delighted Benefits Specialists has been chosen to administer this pilot project in Central New York.”

Assemblywoman Joan Christensen said: “These days, many of New York’s hardworking families are struggling, making affordable health care coverage more important than ever. By providing low-cost health insurance to New York’s small businesses and individuals, the Healthy NY program is a comprehensive initiative that will deliver health care to those who need it most.”

Assemblyman Bill Magnarelli said: “It is great news for Central New York that the Syracuse-based company Benefits Specialists has been chosen to administer this vital pilot program. Insurance costs for small businesses have skyrocketed – this program is critical to ensuring small businesses and individuals have access to affordable health plans.”

Assemblyman Al Stirpe said: “As a former small business owner, I know one of the main obstacles to job creation and economic development in New York is the high cost of health insurance. By giving individuals and small businesses in Central New York an affordable health insurance option, we are taking a step in the right direction towards making Upstate New York more business-friendly.”

Since 2000, small business health insurance premiums have increased an average of 13.5 percent annually, forcing struggling employers to scale back or cancel employee health insurance. In keeping with objectives to expand health insurance coverage to those most in need, the New York State Insurance Department issued a request for proposals for companies that could both offer the Healthy NY insurance packages and also increase enrollment in the program. The Insurance Department chose Benefits Specialists after a competitive statewide bidding process.

In partnership with United Healthcare as the insurance carrier, Benefits Specialists will administer the Healthy NY pilot program to small businesses and individuals in Cayuga, Cortland, Oneida, Oswego, Onondaga, Lewis, Madison, Herkimer and Jefferson counties. The benefits offered will include several Healthy NY packages, including some specifically designed for Central New York.

Healthy NY is not designed as a replacement for companies now offering insurance and there are a number of participation qualifications. For more information about the pilot project and to determine an applicant's eligibility, please contact Benefit Specialists of NY at 315-470-1930.

Additional news available at www.ny.gov/governor/press

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