

Maryland Health Benefit Exchange Fact Sheet

The **Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE)**, a public corporation and independent unit of state government, is responsible for the development and operation of **Maryland Health Connection**, the state-based insurance marketplace for Marylanders residents and small businesses to explore compare health coverage options, determine eligibility for tax subsidies and credits, and enroll in private and public health insurance plans.

Goal of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange The MHBE aims to make health insurance accessible to hundreds of thousands of Marylanders, many for the first time, by establishing a fair and transparent marketplace for comparing health insurance options and enrolling in plans that best meets the needs of individuals, families and small businesses.

Development of Maryland Health Connection: The 2010 Affordable Care Act requires states to either to establish and operate a health insurance exchange by 2014, or to participate in a federal exchange. Maryland opted to create a state-based exchange (SBE) to capitalize on its current regulatory structures, existing infrastructure and other resources, and strong network of carriers, brokers, and other third-party administrators. On April 12, 2011, the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange Act was signed into law by Governor Martin O'Malley, which established Maryland's Health Benefit Exchange as a public corporation and an independent unit of state government. In December 2012, the federal government conditionally certified Maryland to operate Maryland Health Connection.

How Maryland Health Connection Works: Beginning in October 2013, MarylandHealthConnection (.gov) will open as the online marketplace where individuals and small businesses can do apples-to-apples comparison shopping for high quality, affordable health coverage from carriers. Health coverage options, benefits, rates and quality will be compared easily. Maryland Health Connection will also support small business access to affordable coverage by providing tax credits. Serving as a conduit for those below 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL), the exchange will assist individuals and families in determining eligibility for Medicaid and facilitate enrollment. Maryland Health Connection will include two separate exchange portals, one for individuals and another for small businesses. In-person assistance will be available for individuals and small businesses statewide through a variety of consumer assistance programs including Connector Entities that will provide navigators and assisters to work with consumers through eligibility and enrollment matters, as well as conduct outreach and education assistance. Insurance producers statewide will also become authorized to provide consumer assistance statewide. A Consolidates Service Center (call center) is scheduled to open in August 2013 to provide access to services such as a translation services, customer support and enrollment assistance.

Enrollment and Coverage: Open enrollment for individuals and families and small businesses will begin October 1, 2013 and for small businesses of January 1, 2014. Plan effective dates begin on January 1, 2014 for qualified health plans.

Several Key Principles Guide the Policy Decisions of the MHBE:

- Accessibility *Reduce the number of Marylanders without health insurance*
- Affordability *Make coverage affordable within the SBE and generally across the state*
- Sustainability *Ensure that the MHBE succeeds and endures*
- Stability *Pursue a step-by-step approach that builds on existing strengths of the current system*
- Health Equity *Address disparities in health care*
- Flexibility *Adjust MHBE policy as the changing market requires*
- Transparency *Activities should be transparent and services easily available*

MHBE Governance: The Exchange is governed by a nine-member board of trustees, including the Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, who serves as Board chair; the Commissioner of the Maryland Insurance Administration; and the Executive Director of Maryland Health Care Commission. Rebecca Pearce serves as the MHBE's Executive Director and was appointed by the Board in September 2011.

- Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, *Board Chair*
- Darrell Gaskin, Associate Professor, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, *Vice Chair*
- Therese Goldsmith, Commissioner of the Maryland Insurance Administration;
- Ben Steffen, Acting Executive Director of the Maryland Health Care Commission;
- Georges Benjamin, M.D., Executive Director of the American Public Health Association;
- Jennifer Goldberg, Assistant Director of Advocacy for Health Care and Elder Law, Maryland Legal Aid Bureau;
- Enrique Martinez-Vidal, Vice President for State Policy and Technical Assistance, AcademyHealth and Director of State Coverage Initiatives;
- Thomas Saquella, Former President, Maryland Retailers Association; and
- Kenneth S. Apfel, Professor of Practice, University of Maryland School of Public Policy

The **Maryland Health Care Reform Coordinating Council** was established by Governor O'Malley to make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly as to how Maryland could best implement federal health care reform. The Council, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Brown and Secretary Sharfstein, is composed of executive and legislative branch leaders in health care. In their January 2011 report, the Council made recommendations in five key areas of health care reform implementation: 1) the Health Benefit Exchange and insurance markets; 2) health care delivery and payment reform; 3) public health, safety nets, and special populations; 4) health care workforce development; and 5) communications and outreach. The Governor's Office of Health Care Reform has been tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Council's recommendations.