



SOCIAL SERVICES NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CATAWBA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES IS NOT A 'NAVIGATOR' FOR AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

HICKORY -- Catawba County Social Services is not a "navigator" for the Affordable Care Act (sometimes called ObamaCare) and cannot assist citizens applying for insurance through the Federal Marketplace.

Because North Carolina did not choose to expand Medicaid, Catawba County Social Services can only help citizens who meet the previous guidelines for Medicaid or NC Health Choice. Adult Medicaid programs are still limited to adults who are blind, disabled, and/or elderly and meet income guidelines.

Social Services employees are not ACA "navigators," and cannot provide citizens with guidance on how to interpret information, help them submit applications, or discuss tax subsidies associated with the ACA Insurance Marketplace.

Persons wishing to find out more about their health insurance options under the ACA should go to <http://www.healthcare.gov> (En Español: <http://www.CuidadoDeSalud.gov>). They may also call 1-800-318-2596 or, if they are deaf or hard-of-hearing, they may use the TTY line at 1-855-889-4325. Unfortunately, there are no registered ACA navigators in our area. The Catawba County Library System is planning to offer a series of classes about the ACA at a later date.

The federal Health Insurance Marketplace (the "exchange") is a resource to help find health coverage issued by private companies. The open enrollment period for the exchange runs from October 1 through March 31, 2014. North Carolinians can shop, compare and choose a health insurance plan that meets their and their family's needs. Coverage is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2014.

There are two official providers of Federal Marketplace Insurance in North Carolina: Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, which can be accessed at <http://www.bcbsnc.com>, and Coventry, whose website is <http://chccarolinas.coventryhealthcare.com>. Independent insurance agents who are registered with these companies may also provide information.

Citizens who think they may be eligible for Medicaid or NC Health Choice may apply online through the website <https://epass.nc.gov>. This online portal also allows citizens to apply for Food Assistance. Persons without computer access may also come to the Catawba County Social Services office, located at 3030 11th Ave. Dr. SE, Hickory, NC 28602 to apply for Medicaid, NC Health Choice and other Social Services programs.

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