

Report: High number of Nevadans without health insurance

By David McGrath-Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

A quarter of Nevadans under 65 did not have health insurance at some point in 2009, making the Silver State the third most uninsured state per capita in the United States, according to U.S. Census data released this month.

Nevada's low rate of insured, which is not a surprise to state experts, is primarily the result of a lean state health care system compared with the rest of the country. Namely, Nevada has restricted access to Medicare to the poorest of the poor, while other states offer public health care coverage to more residents.

The statistics also highlight a looming problem the state is facing: how to get all those uninsured people covered by the beginning of 2014. That's when the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act mandates individuals have health insurance.

The cost facing states with a high number of people who are uninsured, like Nevada, has many state health officials concerned.

In 2009, soon after President Barack Obama signed the federal legislation, a state analysis found that Medicaid expansion would cost \$636 million from 2014 to 2019. The state's board for the Silver State Health Care Exchange is scheduled to have its first meeting this month to prepare to implement the rules. (States including Nevada are seeking to throw out parts of the federal legislation, calling unconstitutional the mandate that all be covered.)

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