



PAT QUINN

Governor

JACK MESSMORE

Acting Director

# NEWS

## Illinois Department of Insurance

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Monday, August 22, 2011

**CONTACTS:**

Anjali Julka: (312) 814-0093

Milly Santiago: (312) 814-0908

## **Illinois Awarded More Than \$5 Million to Establish Health Insurance Exchange**

### *Federal Grant Will Help Create More Competitive Health Insurance Marketplace for Families and Businesses*

CHICAGO – August 22, 2011. The Illinois Department of Insurance (DOI) received \$5.128 million in federal funds to develop and maintain an Illinois-based American Health Benefits Exchange (“Exchange”) -- a transparent, centralized competitive health care marketplace where individuals and small businesses can purchase health insurance coverage. The federal grant funds, issued under the federal health reform law known as the Affordable Care Act, will help lay the foundation for Illinois lawmakers and other stakeholders to create an Illinois Health Benefits Exchange that best meets the needs of Illinois families and businesses.

“Everyone in Illinois deserves access to quality, affordable health care,” said Governor Quinn. “Illinois must develop a strong health insurance marketplace to ensure that our families and employers – especially our small businesses – have appropriate health care options and much-needed financial security. This federal grant will aid us in creating a robust exchange, and developing the tools to make it easy for everyone to use.”

The DOI is planning for an Illinois Health Benefits Exchange that will include an easy-to-use website and health plan comparison tool to empower individuals and small businesses with more control, choice and protection while shopping for and enrolling in health insurance coverage that is tailored to their needs.

Specifically, the activities funded to achieve the goals of the state’s exchange over the next year include: 1) Complete the State’s efforts to conduct comprehensive background research on the current health insurance coverage marketplace, projections for the future of health insurance coverage, and the impact of establishing an health insurance marketplace in Illinois; 2) Design the information infrastructure that will be required by businesses and consumers of the exchange ; 3) Hire the necessary staff to plan and coordinate with consultants to create the initial design features of an Exchange in Illinois; and 4) Educate the public on an Illinois exchange and engage stakeholders in the design of exchange operations.

“Illinois families and small businesses continue to struggle with the affordability and availability of health insurance coverage, and are still faced with options that are neither competitive nor easy to understand,” said DOI Acting Director Jack Messmore. “This Department intends to continue to support the establishment of a competitive marketplace to

purchase health coverage that better protects and empowers consumers to make the right choice for them and their families."

The State's grant application, which outlines in detail its proposal to consider and plan for the establishment of a state-based health insurance exchange in Illinois, can be viewed at: <http://www.insurance.illinois.gov/hirc/hie.asp>.

**More Information**

The Department's mission is to protect consumers by providing assistance and information, by efficiently regulating the insurance industry's market behavior and financial solvency, and by fostering a competitive insurance marketplace. The Department assists consumers with all insurance complaints, including health, auto, life, and homeowner. Consumers in need of information or assistance should visit the Department's Web site at [www.insurance.illinois.gov](http://www.insurance.illinois.gov) or call its toll-free hotline at (866) 445-5364.

###