

The Arkansas Insurance Department (AID) is funded by the U.S. DHHS Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight (CCIIO) to lead a transparent, open, and inclusive planning process that will determine the best method for establishing a viable Health Benefits Exchange for Arkansas--one that best serves Arkansans, is in compliance with the Affordable Care Act, and is financially sustainable. A key question is whether that Exchange will be operated by Arkansans for Arkansans or by the Federal Government for Arkansans. It is estimated that nearly a half-million Arkansas residents will be newly eligible for Medicaid, insurance premium subsidies or other premium cost reductions through the Exchange beginning January 1, 2014. The AID is engaged in three primary efforts to ensure broad stakeholder involvement in this planning (more in depth information can be found at www.hbe.arkansas.gov):

- **Exchange Planning Workgroups.** Six workgroups with membership exceeding 125 persons began monthly meetings in May. The six groups are: Community Leaders; Consumers; Information Technology; Outreach, Education, and Enrollment; Providers and State Agencies.
- **Statewide Community Feedback.** Stakeholder opinions are being sought through: 1) >60 community meetings held in 16 towns across Arkansas (schedule attached); 2) key informant interviews; 3) a web-based survey; 4) a fall 2011 Exchange Planning Summit; and 5) participation in fall, 2011 Public Hearings in each Arkansas Congressional District. Through an interagency agreement, UAMS Partners for Inclusive Communities and the UAMS College of Public Health are leading this effort. Findings will be reported through a preliminary written report in mid-July and a final report in November.
- **Background Research and Study.** Following a competitive bidding process, First Data Government Solutions was selected as the background research and planning contractor charged with researching, analyzing, and recommending viable governance, business, and technology options for development of a self-sustaining Health Benefits Exchange that best meets needs of Arkansans. First Data's work will include key informant interviews, web-based surveys (the first on Governance Options has just been completed), and an assessment of Information technology capacities and needs, governance and operational options, marketplace, information technology-program integration, and financial modeling to include administrative costs and revenue options. First Data recommendations are due August 31, 2011. Three sub-contractors (two Arkansas-based) are assisting First Data in this planning work:
 - Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care – Communication, quality measurement, and evaluation – including consumer education, outreach, and engagement;
 - Powell and Associates - Research and consulting support related to demographics of Arkansas's insured and non-insured populations including by employee/employer or public coverage, health insurance products and premiums, and financial projections/modeling for the Arkansas Exchange;
 - Solutia – Actuarial consulting and analyses to help identify likely individual and employer behavior and marketplace rules that will prevent incentive conflicts/adverse selection and promote continuity in benefit designs, enrollment, and provider networks.

A Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the Six Workgroups, UAMS, and First Data meets bi-weekly. For more information, contact Arkansas Health Benefits Exchange Planning Staff: Cynthia Crone, APN, Planning Director at 501-683-3634, Cynthia.Crone@arkansas.gov or Bruce Donaldson, CHC, Planning Specialist at 501-683-7077, Bruce.Donaldson@arkansas.gov.