

Clinic-Based Health Care Makes Its National Debut

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WHEELING - A new kind of health care for families without health insurance is now available in the Ohio Valley.

Dr. Vic Wood, a physician and owner of Doctors Urgent Care, announced Monday that Primary Care One, a clinic-based health care program administered by the West Virginia Health Care Authority, is now in operation, thanks to Gov. Joe Manchin and many state delegates.

"A new era in health care has come to Wheeling," Wood said. "This program is the first of its kind to be launched in the United States."

While the initiative is not considered a health insurance program, it does provide health care coverage similar to insurance. For a monthly fee of \$83, an individual seeking health care can receive a variety of primary and urgent care services offered by Doctors Urgent Care, including treatment for minor illnesses, physicals, blood tests, mental health care and generic drug coverage. That care also is available to families for \$125 a month. No claim forms, co-payments or pre-authorizations are required in the one-year contract designed to give health care on a regular basis to the growing number of people who need it.

"Over 47 million people in the United States are without health care coverage," Wood said. "This fills a huge void."

Another service available through Primary Care One is coverage that small and medium size businesses can provide for employees. Wood said the rising cost of health insurance for companies is a huge problem, and this program offers an alternative.

"Conventional health care is expensive," he said. "But this program gives them an option they can afford."

Manchin first introduced the pilot program in his 2006 State of the State Address, saying the majority of West Virginians employed full-time do not have health insurance because they are not eligible for their employers' plans or because the employer cannot afford to offer such a benefit. He proposed two plans, Primary Care One and another program that would offer more in-depth coverage.

"Both of these new health care initiatives are affordable, cost-effective and require no state subsidies," Manchin said in the 2006 address. "Make no mistake - these are bold steps. They serve as an example of how government and the private sector can work together to provide basic health services to the vast majority of West Virginians without health coverage."

While the in-depth plan is still in the works, Primary Care One is now in operation, and Wood said it paves the way for clinic-based health care across the country.

"If it works in Wheeling, it will do well anywhere," he said. "This addresses a problem the entire country has, and I think there will be a significant response."

The program is now available at the Wheeling office of Doctors Urgent Care and is accepting applicants. Wood said once an application is received, the applicant will be contacted within 24 hours by a Doctors Urgent Care representative. He said those interested in applying can call (304) 232-0701 or visit the Primary Care One Web site.

Doctors Urgent Care is a walk-in clinic, and no appointments are taken. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.