**Beat: Health**

# Obamacare website suffers outages hours before enrollment deadline

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**USPA News -** A software bug identified during overnight maintenance and a technical problem due to surges of traffic caused two separate outages on the U.S. government`s health insurance website on Monday, just hours before the enrollment deadline, officials said. The problems began early Monday morning when new users attempting to apply for health care insurance under Obamacare were greeted with an error message that said: "The system isn`t available at the moment. We`re currently performing maintenance."

It took about four hours for technicians to fix the problem, which officials said was caused by a software bug identified during overnight maintenance. Hours later, the technology team at the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, which monitors the HealthCare.gov website in real-time, identified an issue with users attempting to create new accounts. The fault was caused by application and enrollment tools which were temporarily unavailable to new users, caused by a flood of last-minute sign-ups. CMS spokeswoman Joanne Peters announced at about 12:50 p.m. Eastern time that the second issue had also been fixed, allowing new users to continue the sign-up process. "There was an issue earlier this pm with users creating new accounts - it has now been resolved and all functionality is back up," she said. While the system was unavailable, consumers were able to leave their email address and were invited back when the system became available again. Consumers were also able to complete their application by calling the Health Insurance Marketplace call center at 1-800-318-2596. According to Peters, there were more than 100,000 people concurrently in the system as of noon ET Monday, when the second outage was still ongoing. Users who were already in the system at that time were able to complete enrollment and were unaffected by the problems, the spokeswoman said. The last day for open enrollment is Monday, days after President Barack Obama announced that more than 6 million Americans had already signed up for private health insurance plans through the federal and state Marketplaces since October 1. The first weeks were marked by widespread technical problems, causing intense criticism. But over the past week, the website handled record consumer traffic, supporting more than 8.7 million visits since March 23, with 2 million alone the immediately previous weekend. The site continued to perform under the largest sustained period of volume with average response times of less than 400 milliseconds and an error rate of 0.5 percent, according to the government. In the final weekend of the first ever open enrollment period for the Health Insurance Marketplace, consumers nationwide rushed to meet the March 31 deadline to enroll in the Obama Administration`s affordable health care program. The 24/7 Health Insurance Marketplace call center took more than 2.5 million calls in the last week alone, compared to 2.4 million calls for the entire month of February. Over the last week, the HealthCare.gov team sent emails to millions of people and more than 65,000 text messages to consumers, reminding them of the steps needed to complete enrollment before the deadline. The Marketplace Call center was likely to break the 1-800-Medicare call center`s May 15, 2006, record of 646,000 calls in a single day - a record that was set on the last day of the initial open enrollment period for Medicare Part D.

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