Gov. Beshear Provides Easier Access to Quality Health Coverage, Benefits with New, Improved kynect

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FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 5, 2020) – Taking a major step forward in his commitment to provide quality health care to Kentuckians, Gov. Andy Beshear announced Monday the state has reconnected kynect (https://kynect.ky.gov/s/?language=en_US) in order to provide easier access to health coverage and other benefits.

Gov. Beshear said the new kynect offers expanded benefits, enhanced usability, a new mobile-friendly format and helps to ready the commonwealth for the return of the state-based exchange, scheduled for enrollment in 2021 to begin the exchange in January 2022. The move is expected to save Kentuckians about $15 million a year.

“Even as the state continues to battle the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), we have remained committed to moving the state forward on major initiatives including expanding access to health care,” Gov. Beshear said. “Every member of Team Kentucky should have health care – it is a basic human right. Now that kynect is back, it is easier for Kentuckians to access the benefits they need so they can afford to see a doctor and get the care they deserve.”

Joined by Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman, Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) officials and community partners, the Governor said the portal looks similar to the original kynect, launched in 2013, but includes new features and services.

The portal offers access to the national health benefit exchange; access to enrollment through the state, including Medicaid, the Kentucky Children’s Health Insurance program (KCHIP) and the Kentucky Integrated Health Insurance Premium Payment program. Qualified families can now also access SNAP food assistance benefits and family and childcare assistance programs. Additional resources include support for job training,

foster care, elder care and addiction, as well as support for veterans with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, homeless Kentuckians and many more people. The portal was created to bring these benefit information resources and community partners together for a better Kentucky in one location.

While the state is making progress, Kentucky still sees some of the worst health outcomes in the country, including ranking in the top 10 in lung cancer, diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

Through kynect, “We expect more Kentuckians to get the aid they need to improve health outcomes,” Lt. Gov. Coleman said. “A healthier Kentucky leads to stronger families, better education, a better economy and a better quality of life for everyone. A better Kentucky is what we are all working toward, and kynect is helping us get there.”

Monday’s announcement is yet another step forward the Beshear administration has taken to support the health and well-being of Kentucky families, which has been critical during the global health pandemic.

CHFS Secretary Eric Friedlander said, “Kynect amplifies the reassurance we continuously receive from Gov. Beshear: Health care is a basic human right. I appreciate the hard work that went into making this new portal a reality. It is important that we can provide trusted information on how to access health care, which is Kentuckians’ first line of defense against chronic and preventable diseases and conditions in the commonwealth.”

Kynect, relaunched with partners collaborating to work *Together for a Better Kentucky*, initially started in advance of 2014 health insurance enrollment as a one-stop website for health coverage, provided options to apply for Medicaid or choose qualified health plans filed with the Kentucky Department of Insurance.

The CHFS site was lauded as a national model and helped to sign up over 500,000 Kentuckians in 2014. Since it was disconnected under the previous administration, more narrow information has continued to be accessible through benefind.ky.gov (http://www.benefind.ky.gov). This site will now be retired as all the benefits are streamlined on kynect.

CHFS Deputy Secretary Carrie Banahan said the new portal provides additional support for the move back to the state-based exchange.

“In developing the new kynect, we have taken care to gather information from people who frequently access these benefits and information,” Banahan said. “We’re talking to community partners, technology experts, assisters and others who provided input to help reimagine this version of kynect, which will better serve Kentuckians for years to come.”

Whether someone visits from a computer or mobile device, Kentuckians can accomplish the tasks they’ve set out to do online, without having to stand in a line to apply for benefits.

Kentuckians can now also track the progress of an application and see next steps after an application is completed. Applicants can snap a photo of documents with a smartphone and upload it if information is requested for the application.

The Governor said to generate statewide awareness, a comprehensive marketing campaign has been developed that will reach every portion of the state. Familiar animated characters representing all walks of life are featured in television, print, outdoor and digital advertising.

Community health partners lauded the administration for streamlining benefits via kynect.

“In the middle of a pandemic, worrying about whether you can afford health care or put food on the table is the last thing Kentuckians need,” said Emily Beauregard, executive director of Kentucky Voices for Health. “Gov. Beshear’s decision to bring back kynect means enrolling in health insurance and other benefits will be easier than ever with the help of kynectors who are working on the ground in every county of our commonwealth. It’s a simple way to make our safety net work better for Kentuckians, just when we need it most to get through this crisis healthy and whole.”

“KPCA is excited for the redesign and believes it will result in a more user-friendly portal to access health insurance coverage,” said Carol Adkins, coordinator of community engagement and outreach with the Kentucky Primary Care Association. “Our association’s certified navigators were able to participate in the virtual testing environment to explore, test and provide feedback on screens and redesign features. The new mobile app will enable Kentuckians to more easily add a kynector, update their cases and upload requested documents from their mobile devices. This upgraded process will also provide an opportunity for applicants to approve a kynector by text or email which will create a more accessible and efficient experience for those obtaining health insurance coverage and the kynectors helping them.”

The URL is kynect.ky.gov (http://kynect.ky.gov), and cyber-users who have bookmarked or who key in benefind.ky.gov (http://www.benefind.ky.gov) will be directed to the new site.

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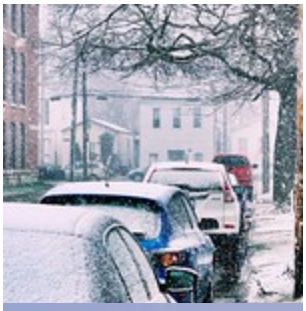
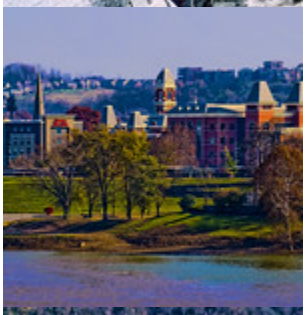
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/7372926@N06/47218320672/in/pool-773339@N20)
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/miamiboy/47184596121/in/pool-773339@N20)
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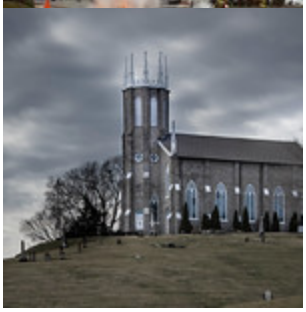
-  (https://www.flickr.com/photos/127721144@N05/46918072332/in/pool-773339@N20)

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