In our continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Washington Health Benefit Exchange (Exchange) opened a Public Health Emergency (PHE) Special Enrollment Period (SEP) for customers February 15 - August 15, 2021. During the first 13 weeks, over 21,000 have signed up for coverage— including about 8,500 through the PHE SEP and 13,000 through existing, ongoing SEPs (triggered by qualifying events like loss of employer coverage, lost income, and other changes in program eligibility). The increased rate of mid-year signups is slightly lower than during the Uninsured SEP from March-May 2020 in which nearly 22,000 individuals signed up for qualified health plan coverage. However, this is still higher than enrollments in non-pandemic years, averaging about 150% of normal (~8,400 per month compared to ~5,500 per month normally). This data snapshot provides additional information about the over 21,000 who signed up and how this activity compares to other enrollment periods.

Among those who signed up from 2/15 – 5/2/2021, a much higher percentage were new customers. The percent of new customers increased from 19% of those who enrolled during the latest open enrollment period (OE8 11/1/2020 - 1/15/2021) to 78% of those who signed up during the SEP time-period 2/15 – 5/2/2021.

21,210 total customers have signed up under SEPs since 2/15, 78% with no Exchange participation in the past 12 months (new).
Among new customers who signed up from 2/15 – 5/2/2021, 41% chose a Cascade Care plan (Standard or Public Option).

Among those who signed up from 2/15 – 5/2/2021, a higher percentage were younger. Notably, the percent between 18-34 years old increased from 25% among those who enrolled during OE8 to 35%. Signups among age 55 and older decreased from 35% to 23%.
The carriers with the highest percentage of SEP signups to-date are: Molina, Kaiser, Coordinated Care and Lifewise.

Overall race/ethnicity reports are similar to previous enrollment periods with a slight increase in Black/African American signups –now at 3.4% compared to 1-2% during OE 6-8, and 3% during the 2020 Uninsured SEP.