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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Open Enrollment for NYS's Health Insurance Exchange Opens November 1;
New Option Offers Big Cost Savings**

BREWSTER, NY—On November 1, 2015, open enrollment for New York State's official health plan exchange begins, featuring a new option called "The Essential Plan." This insurance plan costs much less than other health plans, but offers the necessary benefits as the name implies. The Essential Plan is designed to provide quality health insurance to low-income people who don't qualify for Medicaid or Child Health Plus, which consumers can apply for throughout the year. The Open Enrollment period for the Essential Plan and other health plan exchange options, continues through Sunday, January 31, 2015.

Access to care is an important aspect to a healthy community and the Putnam County Department of Health works with two partner organizations to help potential patients select and enroll in the best insurance plan for them, the Essential Plan or another one. MISN, a not-for-profit agency dedicated to family and community health and wellness, serves the mid-Hudson region, and offers guidance to Putnam residents, free of charge and bias. Fidelis Care NY also offers free guidance to their array of health insurance plans. Both have bilingual representatives available to help in Putnam County. MISN navigators, aptly named since they help steer individuals to the right plan, can be reached at 1-800-453-4666 or by email at navigator@misn.ny.org. A Putnam representative for Fidelis Care can be reached 845-483-1292, extension 25114.

Those who qualify for The Essential Plan may pay \$20 a month per person, or nothing at all depending on income. The plan has no deductible, meaning that the plan begins paying for health services right away. Routine doctor exams, screenings, and other preventative services are provided for free. Doctor ordered tests; prescription drugs and hospital visits are also covered.

New York State's health insurance exchange or marketplace, called "The New York State of Health," was launched in October 2013 under the Affordable Care Act. It allows New Yorkers to compare health plan options and apply for assistance that could lower the cost of their health insurance. They may also qualify for coverage through Medicaid or Child Health Plus. Anyone who needs health coverage can apply through the exchange.

The Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth, www.facebook.com/RunWalkPutnam, www.instagram.com/PutnamHealthNY and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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