

## Online searches for health insurance info jump

by WA-Business-News

If you lose your job, you probably lose your health insurance, and that means looking for ways to extend it or replace it.

Internet tracking firm comScore says online searches for the word "COBRA" have almost tripled in the last year. Searches for Medicaid information have almost doubled. "COBRA" stands for the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, which gives workers and their families who lose their health benefits the right to continue group health benefits provided by their group health plan.

At the same time, comScore says traffic to actual health insurance and HMO sites has declined sharply, as workers lose their benefits. The biggest declines were at UnitedHealth Group, which saw unique visitors to its sites decline 29 percent from June 2008 to June 2009. Visits to Aetna's sites dropped 12 percent over that same period, and fell 11 percent at WellPoint Inc.

Sample search terms that have seen significant gains include "COBRA," up 176 percent from June 2008 to June 2009, "Apply for Medicaid," up 104 percent and "Health Insurance Quotes," up 45 percent. Search terms often lead to sites that sell individual health care coverage or offer information about it. ComScore (NASDAQ:SCOR) says sites that have seen growing traffic include USInsuranceonline.com, AssurantHealth.com and eHealthinsurance.com. American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.

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