

# ★ Surge in ACA enrollment

## More than 1M New Yorkers sign up for 2019

BY DELTHIA RICKS  
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New Yorkers in record numbers have enrolled in health insurance plans under the Affordable Care Act, topping 1 million enrollees for the first time, state health officials said Monday.

“Despite the constant threats to the Affordable Care Act, New York’s health insurance marketplace stands strong,” New York State of Health Executive Director Donna Frescatore said in a statement.

New York State of Health is the health insurance exchange that allows individuals, families

and small businesses to shop for coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

“More than a million consumers have already enrolled in a Qualified Health Plan or the Essential Plan,” Frescatore said of the two broad categories under which insurance plans can be purchased.

State data showed that 1,023,892 people enrolled in a health plan under the Affordable Care Act, 83,000 more than at the same time last year.

Last-minute enrollees — more than 16,000 people — signed up for health insurance Saturday, the last day to enroll for Jan. 1 coverage, according to the state Health Department.

The two broad categories, Qualified and Essential health plans, offer similar coverage but different payment structures. Qualified plans are categorized as platinum, gold, silver

Qualified Health plans

**247,411**

Essential plan

**776,481**

Total enrolled for 2019

**1,023,892**

Increase over this time last year

**83,000**

SOURCE: NYS HEALTH DEPARTMENT

and bronze, all covering doctor’s visits, hospital stays, emergency, maternity and newborn care, among other services.

Essential plans include inpatient and outpatient care; physician services; diagnostics, and prescription drug coverage with no annual deductible and low out-of-pocket costs.

An estimated 247,411 people enrolled in Qualified plans,

while 776,481 signed up for Essential coverage. Combined with 413,576 youngsters 18 and under, who are enrolled in the Child Health Plus plan and 3.2 million people in Medicaid, more than 4.7 million New Yorkers were covered under plans tallied by Frescatore’s office.

Word of the state’s record enrollment arrived as doctors and legal scholars were scrambling Monday to analyze the latest salvo against the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare.

A federal court judge in Texas struck down ACA on Friday, saying its mandate requiring consumers to buy health insurance was unconstitutional. Without the mandate, the law is baseless and can’t stand, ruled Judge Reed O’Connor of the federal District Court in Fort Worth.

O’Connor’s ruling grew out of a lawsuit filed earlier this year by a group of Republican governors and state attorneys general. Some legal analysts said the ruling could force the act back to the Supreme Court.

Dr. Thomas Madejski, president of the Medical Society of the State of New York, said the lawsuit doesn’t bode well for the health care law.

“Friday night’s Federal District Court ruling that the ACA is unconstitutional has the potential to wreak havoc with New York’s health care system,” Madejski said in a statement Monday.

“While the ACA has many flaws that we urge Congress to work to fix, among its strongest attributes are its mechanisms to enable the purchase of health insurance coverage for millions through a variety of subsidy programs,” he said.

## Vaping by teens up dramatically in '18, study finds

The Associated Press

Twice as many high school students used nicotine-tinged electronic cigarettes this year compared with last year, an unprecedented jump in a large annual survey of teen smoking, drinking and drug use.

It was the largest single-year increase in the survey’s 44-year history, far surpassing a mid-1970s surge in pot smoking.

The findings, released Monday, echo those of a government survey earlier this year. That survey also found a dramatic rise in vaping among children and prompted federal regulators to press for measures that make it harder for kids to get them.

Experts attribute the jump to newer versions of e-cigarettes, such as those by Juul Labs Inc., that resemble computer flash drives and can be used discreetly.

Trina Hale, a junior at South Charleston High School in West Virginia, said vaping ex-

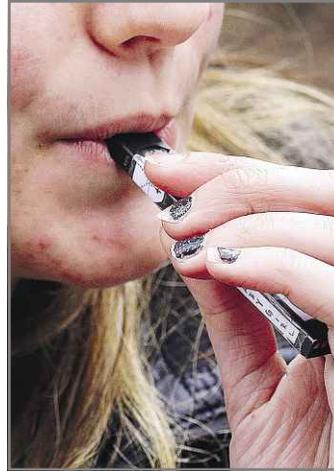
ploded at her school this year.

“They can put it in their sleeve or their pocket. They can do it wherever, whenever. They can do it in class if they’re sneaky about it,” she said.

The federally funded survey released Monday is conducted by University of Michigan researchers and has been operating since 1975. This year’s findings are based on responses from about 45,000 students in grades 8, 10 and 12 in schools across the country. It found 1 in 5 high school seniors reported having vaped nicotine in the previous month.

After vaping and alcohol, the most common thing teens use is marijuana, the survey found. About 1 in 4 students said they’d used marijuana at least once in the past year. It was more common in older kids — about 1 in 17 high school seniors said they use marijuana every day.

Overall, marijuana smoking is at about the same level as it was the past few years. Vaping



Vaping devices can be used discreetly, some students say.

of marijuana rose, however.

More teens, however, are saying no to lots of other substances. Use of alcohol, cigarettes, cocaine, LSD, ecstasy, heroin and opioid pills all declined. Experts say it’s not clear what’s behind those trends.

“What is it that we’re doing right with teenagers that we’re not doing with adults?” said Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, a federal agency that funds the Michigan study.

One theory is that kids today are staying home and communicating on smartphones rather than hanging out and smoking, drinking or trying drugs.

## Teen guilty of assault in dragging of officer

BY MICHAEL O’KEEFFE  
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A Brooklyn teenager accused of injuring an NYPD officer from North Baldwin in 2017 by dragging him with a stolen car was acquitted of attempted murder Monday, but a jury convicted the defendant of first-degree assault.

Justin Murrell, 17, faces a maximum of 10 years in prison when he returns to Brooklyn Supreme Court for sentencing Jan. 7 because he was younger than 16 years old at the time of the incident.

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez’s office said NYPD Det. Dalsh Veve was responding to a report of shots fired in East Flatbush when he approached Murrell, who was sitting in the driver’s seat of an idling Honda that had been stolen in Nassau County, prosecutors said. Three other passengers were in the car. Murrell drove off after Veve attempted to speak to him.

The officer hung onto the car while Murrell, prosecu-

tors said, drove nearly 60 mph for several blocks. He suffered severe brain trauma after he was thrown from the vehicle and is now completely dependent on 24-hour-a-day care.

To cheers and applause from his fellow cops, Veve left a New Jersey rehabilitation center in May.

Murrell’s attorney said during the trial that his client did not intend to hurt the officer. The attorney could not be reached for comment Monday night.

Police Benevolent Association president Patrick Lynch urged the maximum sentence.

“This punk knew he had a police officer hanging off the side of the stolen car that he was driving and he intentionally drove wildly in an attempt to kill the officer,” Lynch said. “This jury fell for this baby-faced punk and now it is imperative that judge give him the maximum sentence for the conviction on the assault of a police officer charge.”