



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 6, 2009

**Media Contact:** Patrick Sturdivant  
Regional Executive Director  
FirstCare Health Plans  
806-784-4304  
psturdivant@firstcare.com

## **FirstCare Exits ERS Program, No Plans to Leave West Texas**

**AUSTIN, Texas** (June 6, 2009) – Today, officials from FirstCare Health Plans (FirstCare) announced that the company has decided not to renew their contract with the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) for the 2010 plan year in the Abilene, Amarillo, and Lubbock regions. FirstCare will continue to serve the Waco ERS market.

"We are excited about the opportunity in that region [Waco] and are fully committed to providing excellent service to our members," said Larry Feltner, director of key accounts.

FirstCare members who currently participate through ERS still have access to the FirstCare provider network. The FirstCare contract with ERS does not expire until August 31, 2009. Since FirstCare has chosen not to participate in the Abilene, Amarillo, and Lubbock service areas, ERS has advised FirstCare members in those areas that they will automatically be enrolled in another plan effective Sep. 1.

Although FirstCare is exiting the ERS program in Abilene, Amarillo, and Lubbock, they are not going to leave the West Texas area.

"FirstCare is extremely proud of our West Texas roots," said Steven Abalos, vice president of sales. "Over twenty-three years ago, High Plains Baptist Hospital in Amarillo joined with local physicians and other medical providers to combat the rising costs of health care. With the help of Covenant Health System in Lubbock and Hendrick Health System in Abilene, that HMO evolved into FirstCare Health Plans. Today we carry on the tradition of working with local physicians to provide quality health care services to the community."

In fact, FirstCare has plans to increase membership in West Texas through the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) spring and summer enrollment, new individual health plans, and other commercial group business.

FirstCare officials state that there has been some confusion surrounding their decision to leave the ERS program. Shortly after the announcement was made, FirstCare received calls from local providers and plan members concerned that FirstCare was moving out of the West Texas area.

- MORE -

"Some companies have informed their employees of our decision and those employees are forwarding the message on to their friends and family who also have FirstCare. Unfortunately they are not communicating the announcement only applies to ERS groups," said Abalos. "We want everyone to know that FirstCare is not leaving the market. Our local presence is our strength and we are looking forward to continuing our success which stems around valued relationships with our agents, members, and communities."

## **About FirstCare Health Plans**

*FirstCare Health Plans (FirstCare) was born & bred in Texas and we are extremely proud of that heritage. FirstCare is owned by two highly respected religious-based health systems – Covenant Health Systems in Lubbock, Texas and Hendrick Health Systems in Abilene, Texas. We were founded in 1985 and now serve the health insurance needs for approximately 200,000 members. Our goal is to provide the highest quality health care services at a reasonable price. We believe that health care should be within the reach of all Texans, and we work hard to provide flexible plans that suit their needs.*

- ★ *FirstCare provides comprehensive health care services to HMO subscribers and their enrolled dependents within their approved service area.*
- ★ *FirstCare also owns Southwest Life & Health Insurance Company (SWL&H), which offers the FirstCare PPO, life insurance, and dental products.*
- ★ *FirstCare Administrative Services adds to our portfolio by providing self-funded services.*

*Our corporate headquarters are located in Austin, Texas. We also have offices in Abilene, Amarillo, Lubbock and Waco. For more information, please visit [www.firstcare.com](http://www.firstcare.com).*

# # #