

VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE FUNDING FOR SFY 2016

Trinka Kerr, Chief Health Care Advocate

April 7, 2015

The Office of the Health Care Advocate:

- Assists individual Vermonters with health insurance and health care issues through our statewide hotline and our website (www.vtlawhelp.org/health), and
- Advocates on behalf of the public on health care policy issues before the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB), other state agencies, and the legislature.
- Has six funding sources, and has a contract administered by the Agency of Administration.

The need for individual consumer assistance has increased.

- Our call volume has hit record levels every month for over a year as a result of the problems related to Vermont Health Connect, and continues to go up.
- March's call volume was almost double the call volume of that in March 2013.
- More than half of the calls involved VHC.

The need for public policy advocacy on behalf of Vermont health care consumers has increased.

- In addition to representing the public in rate review, certificate of need and hospital budget proceedings before the GMCB, the HCA now participates in many of the Vermont Health Care Innovation Project work groups to make sure there is a strong consumer voice in the many health care payment and delivery reform initiatives.
- As the GMCB expands, the HCA should expand as well, or at least not be cut.

The Governor's SFY 2016 budget for the HCA creates a \$40,000 shortfall.

- The amount the HCA needs to **maintain current staffing** is \$1,458,285.
- The Governor's recommended amount is \$1,418,122.
- We are facing this shortfall despite a new federal Consumer Assistance Program grant we wrote and received last fall for \$442,863.
- Last year we also had a shortfall, and part of that was made up by carry forward of \$75,000 from the previous year. This year there is no carry forward.

The Office of the Health Care Advocate, previously named the Office of Health Care Ombudsman, is a special project of Vermont Legal Aid.

Office of The Health Care Advocate

Budget Summary

February 20, 2015

SFY 2016

Proposed SFY 2016 Budget	\$1,458,285
Governor's Recommend	<u>\$1,418,122</u>
<i>Shortfall</i>	(\$40,163)

SFY 2015

SFY 2015 Budget (Agreed to at end of 2014 session)	\$1,404,782
CAP Grant funding for additional .3 tax atty, effective 10/1/14)	<u>\$31,000</u>
Revised SFY 2015 Budget	\$1,435,782
Estimated SFY 14 HCA Carry Forward Funds	(\$76,961)
<i>Agreed to Funding Level</i>	\$1,358,821
Original SFY HCA 2015 Contract (effective - 7/1/2014)	\$1,327,821
Revised SFY 2015 HCA Contract (reflects new CAP funding -10/1/2014)	\$1,358,821
SFY 2015 - Actual Expenses 1st Six Months (7/1/14 - 12/31/14)	\$697,651
State HCA Contract Payments (7/1/14 - 12/31/14)	<u>\$663,911</u>
<i>Contract Shortfall</i>	(\$33,740)
<i>Actual SFY 2014 Carry Forward</i>	<u>\$25,262</u>
<i>1st Six Months Budget Shortfall</i>	(\$8,478)
Remaining SFY 2015 Budget	\$738,131
Remaining State HCA Contract Payments	<u>\$694,910</u>
<i>Contract Shortfall</i>	(\$43,221)
Projected SFY 2015 Deficit	<u>(\$51,699)</u>