

# VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

## OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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## HOUSE HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE EXCHANGE UPDATE

Trinka Kerr, Chief Health Care Advocate

July 23, 2014

- 1. The call volume to the Office of the Health Care Advocate consumer hotline continues at record levels, and is 40% higher than last year.**
  - All of the increase is due to problems with Vermont Health Connect.
  
- 2. The lack of Change of Circumstance functionality continues to create problems for consumers and is causing problems with access to care.**
  - The HCA received 75 VHC calls related to COC problems since April 1.
  - Example: Consumer reports job loss, can't pay premiums to continue coverage through a qualified health plan, loses coverage, does not get moved to Medicaid for several months. Consumer goes without care until she gets onto Medicaid.
  
- 3. VHC's complex invoice and payment system is also creating problems.**
  - The HCA received 65 VHC calls related to invoice problems since April 1.
  - Example: Consumer selects and enrolls in a qualified health plan and pays for several months, but coverage is not activated.
  
- 4. VHC is still not sending Notices of Decision to consumers.**
  - This will create additional problems if the functionality is not operational by November 15, 2014, when open enrollment begins for 2015.
  
- 5. Medicaid renewal problems appear to be partially attributable to VHC technical problems.**
  - Thousands of Medicaid beneficiaries who were supposed to go through a review and be re-enrolled in Medicaid through VHC have not successfully done so.
  - Some of these individuals had problems with the VHC enrollment system or its interface with providers.
  - Example: Medicaid beneficiary re-enrolls in Medicaid through VHC, but does not show as active on Medicaid when he goes to the pharmacy.
  - State is halting reviews and reinstating beneficiaries who were terminated.

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