

VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

OFFICE OF HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE UPDATE

Trinka Kerr

State Health Care Advocate

January 21, 2014

Consumer Assistance

- The Health Care Ombudsman office became the Health Care Advocate office on January 1, 2014.
- The HCA did not see much of an increase in calls related to the new health benefits exchange, Vermont Health Connect (VHC), until October. Calls steadily increased after that.
- December was our busiest December ever; 49% higher than December 2012.
- We received 949 calls in the past quarter (SFY 2014 Q 2), which was the highest call volume for any quarter ever, and a 26% increase over the previous quarter.
- 247 (26%) of the calls this past quarter involved an issue or question related to VHC.
- We would probably have gotten more calls if VHC was able to generate written Notices of Decision. The NODs are supposed to have our phone number on them.
- 164 of the calls were informational about VHC.
- 85 were about the new Medicaid eligibility; 31 were about premium tax credits.
- The HCA saved consumers \$118,165 in these two quarters.
- We launched our new website in October, <http://www.vtlawhelp.org/health>.
- Our website now includes an Online Help Request feature, which enables consumers to request our services online, in addition to through our Hotline, **1-800-917-7787**.
- Our expanded advocacy staff moved into new space in December.

Policy

- Posted our first white paper, *Low Income Taxpayers and the Affordable Care Act*, on our website in our new Health Care Policy section.
- Submitted multiple sets of comments on proposed rate review and exchange regulations.
- Submitted questions and comments to the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB) about hospital budgets.
- Posted information about the rate review process and how the public can file comments on rate review filings on our website.

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

- Commented on the GMCB's new rate review website regarding how to make it more consumer friendly and improve public engagement in the rate review process.
- Submitted multiple comments to Vermont Health Care Innovation Project (VHCIP, formerly SIM) workgroups, e.g. on consumer involvement and quality measures in Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs).
- Submitted comments to VHCIP about what should be included in Medicaid and commercial plan ACO notices.
- HCA and Vermont Legal Aid staff participated in multiple VHCIP workgroup meetings (there are seven workgroups).
- I am a VHCIP steering committee member, and participated in those meetings.
- I am a member of the Medicaid and Exchange Advisory Board (MEAB), and participated in those meetings.
- I also chaired a MEAB subcommittee on Improving Access to Medicaid services.
- We wrote 16 memoranda of law in rate review proceedings.
- We hired a new health care policy analyst in November.