

# VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

## OFFICE OF HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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## HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE UPDATE

**Trinka Kerr**

**State Health Care Advocate**

**January 8, 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.
- 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.
- 96 of the calls were informational.
- 57 were about the new Medicaid eligibility; 9 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 a 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

- We posted our first white paper, *Low Income Taxpayers and the Affordable Care Act*, on our website in our new Health Care Policy section.
- We submitted multiple sets of comments on proposed rate review and exchange regulations.
- We submitted questions and comments to the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB) about hospital budgets.

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

- We posted information about the rate review process and how the public can file comments on rate review filings on our website.
- We 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.
- We 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).
- We 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.