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New Reports Show Blueprint is Lowering Health Care Costs Report shows savings of up to \$2,200 per person per year

BURLINGTON – Gov. Peter Shumlin’s proposal to increase funding to Vermont’s Blueprint for Health is getting a boost from two new reports that show the program is leading national efforts to slow the growth of health care costs – by up to \$2,200 per person, per year, according to one study – and contributing to better health outcomes for Vermonters.

“It’s clear that the Blueprint is lowering health care costs for Vermonters, reducing the need for emergency care, and helping Vermonters lead healthier lives,” Gov. Shumlin said. “As we work to transition to a health care system that rewards quality of care over quantity of care, the Blueprint will be an important part of Vermont’s health care future.”

The first report released by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) measured Medicare savings produced by Vermont’s Blueprint for Health and similar primary care reform efforts in seven other states. Of the eight states, Vermont’s savings were the most dramatic and the Blueprint was one of only two reform efforts that actually achieved slower growth in total Medicare spending. The savings in Vermont were driven mainly by better managed care that reduced the need for acute care such as hospitalizations, according to the study.

That reduced need for acute care also had the effect of improving the health of Blueprint participants, with Medicare beneficiaries assigned to a Blueprint practice predicted to be 3 percent healthier than an average Medicare beneficiary. To see the full report, [CLICK HERE](#).

“In every area of the state, primary care providers, health centers, hospitals and so many others have worked tirelessly and organized a novel approach to providing the citizens in their community with the best health services possible,” said Craig Jones, Executive Director of the Blueprint. “Teams of nurses, social workers, counselors, nutrition experts, and others are working with primary care providers to help citizens live healthier lives and prevent the complications of chronic disease. The results so far are extremely encouraging and we are seeing better outcomes with lower costs. Vermont is uniquely positioned to continue on the path towards an exceptional health system where primary care has a central role.”

The second report release by the Department of Health and Human Services focused on the Support and Services at Home (SASH) program, which is part of the Blueprint for Health. The report used two control groups, one in upstate New York and one in Vermont, and concluded that by the second year the SASH program’s combined interventions resulted in an average \$2,197 per member annual savings to Medicare compared to similar, non-SASH-enrolled New Yorkers, and an average \$1,756 per member annual savings to Medicare compared to similar non-SASH-enrolled Vermonters. To see the full report, [CLICK HERE](#).

“SASH is an integrated team approach to care,” said Nancy Eldridge, Executive Director of Cathedral Square Corporation. “When a team provides ongoing support to Vermonters in their

homes – where health is shaped – health is improved and costs are reduced. The key members of the team are home health, councils on aging, mental health agencies, nonprofit housing providers, hospitals and Blueprint primary care practices.”

Recognizing the success of the Blueprint shown by these reports, Gov. Shumlin’s budget nearly doubles payments to Medicaid’s Blueprint providers with a new \$9 million appropriation, which includes increasing Medicaid’s community health team payments by \$2 million and adding \$7 million to Medicaid medical home payments. The budget also supports Home Health organizations with an additional \$1.25 million to help them move forward with payment reform and invests \$500,000 to leverage \$5 million in federal funds to expand and support community providers such as the Support and Services at Home (SASH) program.

About the Blueprint for Health and SASH

The Vermont Blueprint for Health (Blueprint) is a program for integrating a system of health care for patients, improving the health of the overall population, and improving control over health care costs by promoting health maintenance, prevention, and care coordination and management. The Blueprint works with practices, hospitals, health centers and other stakeholders to implement a statewide health service model in Vermont. The model includes advanced primary care in the form of patient centered medical homes (PCMH), multi-disciplinary support services in the form of community health teams (CHTs), a network of self-management support programs, comparative reporting from statewide data systems and activities focused on continuous improvement (Learning Health System). The program aims to ensure that all citizens have access to high quality primary care and preventive health services and to establish a foundation for a high value health system in Vermont.

The SASH program connects older Vermonters and persons with disabilities with community-based support services and promotes greater coordination of health care using affordable housing communities as the lynchpin. The regional affordable housing organizations partner with local service provider organizations, such as home health, mental health agencies and councils on aging, to create a community-based SASH Team. Using evidence-based practices, key services provided by SASH teams include a comprehensive health and wellness assessment, creation of an individualized care plan, on-site one-on-one nurse coaching, care coordination, and wellness programs. About 4,300 Vermonters are enrolled in SASH at 118 affordable housing sites in all 14 Vermont counties.

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