

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Department of Vermont Health Access

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Two Days Left in Vermont Health Connect Open Enrollment

For Last Remaining Uninsured Vermonters, Federal Fee May Cost More than Health Insurance

WILLISTON, VT – Vermont Health Connect announced today that its Customer Support Center will offer special hours this weekend, the final weekend of open enrollment, to accept new applications and to assist with plan changes. The toll-free number (855-899-9600) will be open:

- Saturday, January 30: 8am to 4:30pm
- Sunday, January 31: 10am to 5pm

Wait times may be long as the Sunday deadline approaches. Customers with questions that are not urgent or related to open enrollment deadlines are asked to wait until next week to call.

Vermonters who do not sign up for coverage or request a plan change by Sunday may have to wait until next January to do so.

“The time has come to sign up,” said Steven Costantino, Commissioner of the Department of Vermont Health Access. “If you need health insurance, these next two days are your best chance to join the more than 96% of Vermonters who already have coverage.”

New customers can fill out an application for health insurance online at VermontHealthConnect.gov. If they’d prefer to first explore health plans and see how much financial help they might qualify for, they can use a [Subsidy Estimator](#) and [Plan Comparison Tool](#).

By signing up for health coverage, Vermonters can avoid having to pay the individual shared responsibility fee when they file their federal taxes. This federal fee for not having health insurance increases in 2016 and the typical uninsured individual will pay \$695 when they file their taxes in spring 2017. Those with higher incomes will pay more – 2.5% of their household income above the filing threshold – and could have to pay for all of their own health care costs on top of that.

Some uninsured individuals and families will even find that it’s cheaper to buy a basic health plan than to pay the fee. Take a couple earning \$40,000 for example. They could find a basic couple plan on Vermont Health Connect for less than \$50 per month – that’s \$600 for the year. Or, if they don’t get insurance, they could pay a federal fee of nearly \$1,400.

Vermont Health Connect’s Plan Comparison Tool has attracted over 10,000 visits in the last six weeks, showing customers the financial help they qualify for and helping them estimate the out-of-pocket costs of various plan options.

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