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Department of Vermont Health Access

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Vermont Health Connect Launches Estimator Tool for Vermont's Small Businesses

New dynamic tool helps small businesses answer 2014 health coverage questions

WINOOSKI, VT – Vermont Health Connect launched its “Small Business Estimator” tool to help small businesses answer important questions about offering health coverage in 2014. The tool, available at VermontHealthConnect.gov, is an important resource for Vermont small businesses to determine if they are eligible to use the health insurance marketplace and to compare the cost of providing health insurance with not providing coverage.

“Small businesses are the engine of our economy in Vermont. We are excited to be able to offer employers the opportunity to prepare now for health insurance market reforms that go into effect early next year,” said Mark Larson, Commissioner of the Department of Vermont Health Access. “At Vermont Health Connect, we are providing Vermont’s small employers with resources to help them determine what makes the most sense for their business and employees when it comes to health coverage.”

The first step an employer will take when using the Estimator is confirming they have a “small business” for the purposes of offering health insurance through Vermont Health Connect. An employer is eligible to purchase health insurance for their employees through Vermont Health Connect if they employed an average of 50 or fewer full-time employees last year. An employer will also be able to compare offering health insurance coverage with not offering coverage. There is no federal penalty for a small employer that does not offer health insurance.

If a small employer decides to offer health insurance through Vermont Health Connect, they choose the menu of plans that will be available to their employees and the amount that they will contribute. Each employee can then take the contribution and apply it to the plan that best meets his or her unique medical needs and budget. Vermont Health Connect will collect all of the employees’ choices for the small business into one bill, reducing paperwork burdens and administrative costs. Every plan offered on Vermont Health Connect is comprehensive, so businesses can rest assured that they are offering their employees valuable, quality options.

If a small business decides not to offer coverage, the employees will be able to find a plan through Vermont Health Connect. Depending on how much the employee’s household earns, they may qualify for a free or low-cost health plan or get financial help to lower the cost of premiums and out-of-pocket costs. Vermonters can visit VermontHealthConnect.gov today to use a Subsidy Calculator to estimate the 2014 financial help available if they do not get health insurance through their job.

For Vermont small businesses with questions about health reform implementation, expert help is available through Navigators and licensed, registered brokers in communities throughout the state

who can provide one-on-one support to help employers make the best decision for their business.

In 2014, Vermont Health Connect will be the one insurance marketplace for small businesses. Vermont Health Connect will allow Vermonters to make side-by-side comparisons of their health coverage options. Both private and public plans will be available through Vermont Health Connect, and starting October 1, all the information needed to find the right plan will be available in one place.

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