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Department of Vermont Health Access

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Vermont Health Connect Update on Small Business Enrollment

WINOOSKI, VT – The Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) today announced that in order to provide clarity and ensure the smoothest possible transition for small businesses that have yet to enroll in a 2014 Vermont Health Connect (VHC) plan, all small businesses that must transition to a VHC plan by April 1, 2014 will directly enroll with either Blue Cross Blue Shield of VT or MVP Health Care. While small business premium processing testing of the VHC website continues, uncertainty remains about the timing of these functions, leading DVHA to recommend direct enrollment for all small businesses that must sign up by the end of March.

This announcement only affects small businesses that have had their 2013 plans extended for up to three months until March 31, 2014 or that have insurance plans that roll over in the first quarter of 2014. These small businesses may sign up for a VHC plan of their choice for the remainder of 2014 through Blue Cross or MVP. Information with enrollment deadlines will be sent to all affected employers. Many small businesses have already directly enrolled in VHC plans through Blue Cross and MVP for all of 2014 and do not need to take further action.

Individuals who do not have access to insurance through work, for whom VHC website premium processing is already working, should continue to sign up online, or through a Navigator, broker or the call center. On the individual side, nearly 27,000 Vermonters have already signed up through VHC. Vermonters whose plans were extended into the first quarter of 2014 – such as those on Catamount or VHAP or those who bought insurance in 2013 as sole proprietors – still must sign up for coverage through VHC. DVHA Commissioner Mark Larson urged them to do so as soon as possible, noting that many may find they qualify for financial assistance to make coverage more affordable.

“We do not have confidence that online premium processing for small businesses will be completed in time to provide a convenient transition for small business owners and their employees,” said DVHA Commissioner Mark Larson. “Making the decision now to support direct carrier enrollment ends the uncertainty and gives those small businesses that have extended their 2013 plans the maximum amount of time to make important health care decisions for their employees. Although Vermont small businesses that directly enroll with Blue Cross or MVP are accessing plans in a different way, they are still enrolling in quality VHC-approved plans.”

Small businesses with extended 2013 plans should contact their carrier for information about directly enrolling in VHC plans. Blue Cross Blue Shield can be reached at 1-800-255-4550. MVP Health Care can be reached at 1-888-687-9872.

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