

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Department of Vermont Health Access

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Two Days Left to Sign Up for January Health Coverage through Vermont Health Connect

WATERBURY, VT – Department of Vermont Health Access officials reminded Vermonters of a key health insurance deadline coming up this week. December 15 (this Thursday) is the last day to sign up with Vermont Health Connect for a health plan that will be effective January 1.

Open Enrollment is a time for new customers to sign up for health and dental plans for the coming year. It is also a time for current customers to compare their existing health plan to other options. While Open Enrollment runs through the end of January, customers who sign up for a qualified health plan after Thursday will have a start date of February 1 (if they sign up by January 15) or March 1 (if they sign up between January 16 and January 31).

Customers will find at least 20 options for qualified health plans from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont and MVP Health Care. Those who aren't sure which plan is the best fit for their family's needs and budget can find help online, in person, and over the phone.

Vermont Health Connect's free 2017 Plan Comparison Tool has already had over 15,000 visits. The anonymous online tool allows customers to compare plans not just by monthly premiums and deductible amounts, but also by estimated total annual costs. In addition, for the nearly four out of five customers who qualify for financial help to make health insurance more affordable, the tool estimates their subsidy based on their annual income. Vermonters can try it out by clicking on "Decision Tools" at VermontHealthConnect.gov.

After taking a couple minutes to enter age, income, health status, and expected use of medical services for all family members, the site presents the plan options in order of estimated total costs, lowest to highest. Users then have several options for sorting the results, or they can click on links to plan details and additional information on insurance carrier websites.

Vermonters who would prefer to talk to a live person about their options can call Vermont Health Connect's toll-free Customer Support Center at 855-899-9600 or set up an appointment with an Assister in their community.

Vermont Health Connect encourages Vermonters to take note of the following dates:

December 15 – Last day to sign up or report change for January 1 coverage

December 26 – Payment due for January 1 coverage

January 15 – Last day to sign up or report change for February 1 coverage

January 31 – Open Enrollment ends

Customers who don't use online accounts are encouraged to plan ahead as call volumes and wait times typically increase as deadlines approach. To date, however, the vast majority of callers have encountered prompt service. Over the first six weeks of open enrollment, more than four out of five (87 percent) calls have been answered within 24 seconds. This performance is well above both the 75 percent target and the 57 percent achieved over the similar period last year. Vermont Health Connect's website has also continued to meet performance targets for load time and availability.

The Customer Support Center will be closed Monday, December 26 and Monday, January 2 for the Christmas and New Year's Day holidays. It will be open 8am to 8pm Tuesday through Friday of both weeks. Customers with online accounts will be able to log on throughout the holiday weekends to make payments and report changes.

Vermont Health Connect's 2017 Open Enrollment began November 1 and runs until January 31. New customers can sign up online, by phone, or in person with an Assister. Current customers are automatically being renewed into 2017 coverage; they are able to call 855-899-9600 or click on the Renewals link in their online account to report changes for the 2017 coverage year. Vermonters who want their health plan to be effective January 1 should complete their selection by December 15.

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