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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Vermont Health Connect Deploys System Upgrade**

**WINOOSKI** – Gov. Peter Shumlin announced this morning that the Vermont Health Connect system was successfully upgraded this weekend. The most notable update is so-called change of circumstance functionality, which will allow customer service staff to process requested changes more quickly.

The website came down Thursday night in preparation for the updates and is back online and available for customers to access their accounts. The system deployment took less than the 36 hours expected. A series of comprehensive verifications then began, and continue, to ensure that newly developed business processes work as expected.

“I appreciate the meticulous preparation that Optum’s team and state staff put into this effort,” the Governor said. “They worked around-the-clock to deploy the new system and kept downtime to a minimum. We still have work to do to ensure the Vermont Health Connect system supports the level of customer service that Vermonters deserve, but today’s successful deployment is a major step in the right direction.”

Prior to this upgrade, it was necessary to enter each requested change into as many as six different databases. That process was not only time-consuming but also led to data integrity issues, caused frustration for Vermonters who were unable to see desired changes reflected on their account in a timely manner, and led to a backlog of pending change requests. As of last week, approximately 10,200 customers were waiting for service requests to be completed.

The upgrades successfully deployed this weekend allow customer service staff to enter changes into one database, and then have those changes updated automatically in the others. This will greatly reduce the amount of time it takes to process a customer’s change request and will allow Vermont Health Connect staff to more quickly eliminate the backlog of pending requests.

In order to ensure a smooth rollout of the new functionality some customer service teams will begin processing change requests immediately. At the same time, all staff will be thoroughly trained to make sure they are able to smoothly and accurately process backlogged requests and new requests from customers.

The deployment of change of circumstance functionality aligns with the [milestones for improved customer service](#) outlined by the Governor in March. The next milestone comes on October 1<sup>st</sup> when two things must happen.

First, customers who report a change to Vermont Health Connect by the 15th day of a month will see that change reflected on their next invoice.

Second, Optum must deliver the technology needed to enable a smooth 2016 enrollment and renewal process. In practical terms, this means that existing customers will have their 2016 health plan information reflected in all systems by the start of the year as long as they report changes by December 15. The contract for that renewal functionality was approved late last week by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that funds and oversees the development of health insurance marketplaces.

Staff processed more than 21,000 renewal service requests this winter and spring – a crucial prerequisite to being able to pull off this weekend's system upgrade. Staff will now be able to make account changes in a fraction of the time.

The following information is intended to help Vermonters understand what to expect in the weeks ahead.

#### **Customers with new changes to report**

Vermonters who have seen a change in their status should call the Customer Support Center or fill out a Change Report Form on the website.

The new functionality will decrease the amount of time it takes customer service staff to process changes. By October 1st, Vermont Health Connect will be expected to process changes that customers report by the 15th day of a month in time to be reflected on the next invoice, and changes reported in the second half of the month on one of the next two invoices.

Customers with urgent needs are asked to call the Customer Support Center at 1-855-899-9600 (toll-free).

#### **Customers who have already reported changes**

Customers with pending changes do not need to call, as their requested changes have been moved to the new system and will be processed in the coming weeks. Customers can expect to see changes previously requested within two or three bills.

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