

VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

OFFICE OF THE HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE

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HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE FUNDING FOR SFY 2016

Trinka Kerr, Chief Health Care Advocate

February 20, 2015

The Office of the Health Care Advocate has two main roles:

- To assist individual Vermonters with health insurance and health care issues through our statewide hotline and our website (www.vtlawhelp.org/health), and
- To protect and represent the public on health care policy issues before the Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB), other state agencies, and the legislature.

The need for individual consumer assistance has increased.

- Prior to the launch of Vermont Health Connect we estimated that our call volume would increase 25% because of the exchange. We added two health care advocates to handle this. We now have seven advocates and 1.5 staff attorneys assisting consumers.
- Call volume increased 40% as a result of VHC, and in the last three months it has continued to set new records. We are swamped.

The need for public policy advocacy on behalf of Vermont health care consumers has increased.

- In addition to representing the public in rate review, certificate of need and hospital budget proceedings before the GMCB, the HCA now participates in many of the Vermont Health Care Innovation Project work groups to make sure there is a strong consumer voice in the many health care payment and delivery reform initiatives.
- As the GMCB expands, the HCA should expand as well, or at least not be cut.

The Agency of Administration's SFY 2016 budget for the HCA creates a \$40,000 shortfall.

- The amount the HCA needs to maintain current staffing is \$1,458,285. This is what we told AoA last fall, and what we thought they agreed to.
- The amount proposed by AoA is \$1,418,122.
- This is despite a new federal Consumer Assistance Program grant last fall for \$442,863.
- A \$40,000 deficit will probably require a staffing cut.
- One possible funding source is through the bill back provision of 18 V.S.A. §§ 9374(h) and 9415. The authority to fund the HCA through bill back expires June 30, 2016.

The Office of the Health Care Advocate, previously named the Office of Health Care Ombudsman, is a special project of Vermont Legal Aid.

Office of The Health Care Advocate

Budget Summary

February 20, 2015

SFY 2016

Proposed SFY 2016 Budget	\$1,458,285
Governor's Recommend	\$1,418,122
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<i>Shortfall</i>	(\$40,163)

SFY 2015

SFY 2015 Budget (Agreed to at end of 2014 session)	\$1,404,782
CAP Grant funding for additional .3 tax atty, effective 10/1/14)	\$31,000
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Revised SFY 2015 Budget	\$1,435,782
Estimated SFY 14 HCA Carry Forward Funds	(\$76,961)
<i>Agreed to Funding Level</i>	\$1,358,821
Original SFY HCA 2015 Contract (effective - 7/1/2014)	\$1,327,821
Revised SFY 2015 HCA Contract (reflects new CAP funding -10/1/2014)	\$1,358,821
SFY 2015 - Actual Expenses 1st Six Months (7/1/14 - 12/31/14)	\$697,651
State HCA Contract Payments (7/1/14 - 12/31/14)	\$663,911
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<i>Contract Shortfall</i>	(\$33,740)
<i>Actual SFY 2014 Carry Forward</i>	\$25,262
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<i>1st Six Months Budget Shortfall</i>	(\$8,478)
Remaining SFY 2015 Budget	\$738,131
Remaining State HCA Contract Payments	\$694,910
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<i>Contract Shortfall</i>	(\$43,221)
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Projected SFY 2015 Deficit	(\$51,699)