

**From:** Coriell, Scott [Scott.Coriell@vermont.gov]  
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**To:** Coriell, Scott  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 17, 2015

**Gov. Shumlin Provides Update on Vermont Health Connect Open Enrollment**

**MONTPELIER** – Two weeks into the third annual open enrollment period for Vermont Health Connect, Gov. Peter Shumlin and top health care officials today provided an update and pointed to the long road the state has traveled to improve the health care marketplace since its launch in 2013.

So far this open enrollment period, more than 18,000 individuals are completely through the renewal process, having had their 2016 plans confirmed with Vermont Health Connect's payment processor and insurance carrier partners. It is expected that all customers will be processed into their 2016 plans by the end of November in time for their January invoice, which mails in early December. There are approximately 30,000 individuals currently enrolled in qualified health plans through Vermont Health Connect.

By way of comparison, the state is two months ahead of where it was last year when Vermont Health Connect did not reach 18,000 individuals completely through the renewal process until late January.

This open enrollment period is markedly different from last year's because of new technology added to the platform in October. In 2014, Vermont Health Connect staff had to manually process each renewal, a time consuming process that took months. This year that process has been automated.

"The number of Vermonters who are completely through the renewal process at this point is very encouraging," Gov. Shumlin said. "This year is a totally different ballgame, and I am pleased with the progress that is being made."

Vermonters satisfied with their health plans do not need to do anything for open enrollment, aside from continuing to pay their monthly premiums. They will be automatically enrolled in the same plan for 2016. Many Vermonters staying in the same plan [will see their monthly premium cost decrease for 2016](#).

Also new this year is a self-service function that allows Vermonters to report many changes online, rather than calling a customer service representative. During the first two weeks of open enrollment, Vermonters used the new self-serve functionality to report 246 changes. Vermonters are able to make many of the most common changes online through the automated feature. Some

more complicated changes – such as adding a new baby to the plan – still require Vermonters to call a customer service representative.

While making clear that there is still work to do, the Governor noted the long road traveled, dating back to 2010 before he was Governor, to deliver on the promise of Vermont Health Connect:

**March 2010** – President Obama signs the Affordable Care Act into law. Almost immediately the constitutionality of the law is challenged and a legal battle erupts.

**November 2011** – The Supreme Court agrees to hear arguments in one of the legal challenges brought against the law, causing confusion as to whether it will be implemented on time or at all.

**June 2012** – The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the major provisions of the Affordable Care Act, giving Vermont and other states just over one year to prepare for the first open enrollment period.

**December 2012** – After ending negotiations with Oracle, Vermont signs contract with CGI to deliver exchange functionality.

**October 2013** – Vermont Health Connect launches on the federally-mandated date. Virtually all exchanges, including the federal exchange, faced widespread technical problems and some states had to delay the launch of their exchanges. During open enrollment, Vermont took a number of steps to ensure no one lost health care coverage because of technical problems with Vermont Health Connect. These included giving individuals and small businesses the option to continue coverage through their 2013 plans through the spring of 2014 and allowing Vermont businesses to purchase health plans directly through Blue Cross and MVP.

**August 2014** – Vermont replaces CGI as the lead contractor for Vermont Health Connect with Optum. This follows a similar move by the federal government, which replaced CGI earlier in the year.

**August to December 2014** – The first household survey following the implementation of Vermont Health Connect is conducted. The survey finds that despite the technical challenges with the website, Vermont's uninsured rate was cut in half thanks to the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, launch of Vermont Health Connect, and hard work of Vermonters across the state to spread the word about the availability of new options for health coverage.

**November 2014** – The second open enrollment period for Vermont Health Connect begins. While the enrollment process is vastly improved for first-time customers, the lack of key functionality makes the renewal process time consuming and staff intensive.

**March 2015** – Gov. Shumlin outlines milestones for improved customer service on Vermont Health Connect, including automated change of circumstance functionality to allow customer service staff to more quickly process customer change requests and eliminate the backlog that

had developed and automated renewal functionality to ensure a smooth open enrollment process in 2015.

**June 2015** – The first milestone is met with the deployment of change of circumstance functionality, which enables Vermont Health Connect staff to address a backlog of over 10,000 change requests.

**October 2015** – The second milestones are met with the elimination of the change of circumstance backlog and delivery of renewal functionality to enable a smooth open enrollment process for 2015.

**November 2015** – Vermont Health Connect open enrollment begins.

“I’m very appreciative to Vermonters for their patience through this process,” Gov. Shumlin said. “While we will continue to work to improve Vermont Health Connect, the time for talking about scrapping it and moving to the federal exchange is over. We should all come together to work to make our exchange a success.”

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