

As the executive director of Vermont Companion Animal Neutering (VT-CAN!) mentioned in the lawsuit this story describes, I am addressing inaccuracies in this story that are fundamental to understanding this case.

Point by point:

1. VTDigger reporter Laura Krantz wrote, “When the time came for Krausz to renew the contract for a second year, Skaskiw sued the state alleging that Krausz had an inside track.”

Skaskiw sued the state before the contract was up for renewal. I decided not to renew the contract for numerous reasons. I was not aware of the charges until after I declined to renew.

2. Reporter Krantz wrote, “Krausz said if clients called VT-CAN asking for a VSNIP application, she would refer them to VSNIP but also mention her own business, which had a private grant to spay and neuter cats that she used to cover the \$25 co-pay for recipients.”

As I mentioned to reporter Krantz, we maintained entirely separate phone lines for these clearly separate programs: VT-CAN’s existing phone line and new a phone line we added just for VSNIP.

When people called the VSNIP line, we always without fail mailed them a VSNIP application (without requiring they send money or SASEs with nonstandard postage amounts, as required under the previous VSNIP administrator).

When people called the VT-CAN phone line for spay/neuter assistance, we offered the options available to help their animals, including VSNIP. (VT-CAN had no grants for dogs so could not assist people seeking financial assistance for canine surgeries -- except through VSNIP, which VT-CAN offered them.)

Some clients who requested VSNIP applications couldn’t use the VSNIP program (e.g., if they needed surgeries for numerous animals immediately or didn’t have time to wait for the VSNIP application process). Private veterinary offices usually will not accept ten

animals at once as the nonprofit VT-CAN clinic can do.

When VT-CAN stepped in to help clients that VSNIP couldn't help, sometimes we'd charge them only the \$25 they'd have paid for the VSNIP copay. That means VT-CAN ate the remainder of the cost – in those cases, VT-CAN NEVER sought VSNIP reimbursement from the state. Several clients seeking VSNIP could not afford even VSNIP's \$25 copay, so VT-CAN performed their pets' needed surgeries and charged these clients nothing at all. In all these cases, VT-CAN lost money but acted in service of its mission to spay/neuter cats and dogs who otherwise would reproduce, contributing to the number one killer of companion animals: overpopulation. (VT-CAN does not begin to cover its expenses from its low services fees, but is able to function in a fiscally responsible way through donations and grants and other fundraising efforts.)

- 3. Reporter Krantz wrote of me, "but also mention her own business, which had a private grant to spay and neuter cats that she used to cover the \$25 co-pay for recipients."*

This could lead readers to inaccurately infer that someone would personally benefit when I mentioned VT-CAN to people inquiring about VSNIP. Actually, when VT-CAN performs grant-funded spay/neuter surgeries, there is no financial gain for individual people or for VT-CAN. Instead, during the year I administered VSNIP, VT-CAN's grants enabled approximately 395 cat surgeries for people who otherwise would not have been able to afford them through VSNIP or any other means available to them. As reporter Krantz noted, this saved money for the VSNIP program, allowing others in need to use the VSNIP funds.

- 4. DCF was not aware that VT-CAN, while it administered the program, provided other discount spay and neuter services under a separate grant and did not refer all clients to VSNIP, Schatz said. DCF was aware, however, that VT-CAN did provide spay and neuter services.*

This is irrelevant as there is no conflict of interest. When people called the VSNIP phone line, they were sent VSNIP applications. Only clients who VSNIP could not help were referred to VT-CAN. But when people called

VT-CAN's entirely separate phone line (for example, in response to VT-CAN's grant-funded ads), we scheduled them into the clinic, which is what they called to request. As I mentioned to reporter Krantz, VT-CAN constantly runs ads to bring in animals eligible under the grants the organization receives. These ads are included in the grant funding for precisely this purpose, as is the case nationally with grant-funded spay/neuter efforts.

5. Skaskiw's contract was for \$43,235 annually. Krausz's was for \$44,294, according to DCF.

This omits the salient fact that VT-CAN bid \$44,294 for the VSNIP contract in 2012. Skaskiw's VSNIP bid was over \$53,000. We charged the state less to administer VSNIP and provided more services such as mailing applications at no charge to applicants and not requiring applicants to mail us SASEs.

6. But DCF officials also admit they made mistakes administering the program, and documents show that under the prior administrator, the program significantly boosted the amount it pays vets who perform the surgeries for pet owners.

As was explained to reporter Krantz, the previous rates were so far below the median that veterinarians were dropping out of the program. The previous median veterinarian rates were incorrectly calculated. The rates should have been corrected to a higher level before I took over. I just made it right when I did.