



STATE OF VERMONT

Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities & Health Care Administration (BISHCA)

89 Main Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-3101 Main Number: 802-828-3301 www.bishca.state.vt.us

Michael S. Bertrand, Commissioner

Release Date: October 20, 2010

Contact: Dean Mudgett, Information Policy & Programs Chief
802-828-4872

Vermont Receives \$135K Federal Health Care Grant

Montpelier, Vt. – The Vermont Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities & Health Care Administration (BISHCA) has been awarded a \$135K grant from the federal Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). The grant is part of the “Affordable Care Act – Consumer Assistance Program” and was awarded through HHS’s Office of Consumer Information & Insurance Oversight.

BISHCA had applied for the funds to help increase and enhance the capacity for consumer assistance activities being conducted by the Office of Health Care Ombudsman (HCO). The HCO is part of Vermont Legal Aid, Inc. (VLA), a statewide non-profit that has been providing consumer assistance services to Vermont residents for over a decade.

“We are extremely pleased to learn that we’ve been awarded this grant,” said Trinka Kerr, the State Health Care Ombudsman. “We have worked hard over the past ten years to establish a strong consumer assistance program and these funds will add much-needed capacity to our program, and allow us to respond to the many new challenges facing health care consumers.”

The HCO currently has four health care advocates who answer consumer inquiries about health care and health insurance issues via its statewide toll-free hotline and website. VLA also has five locations across the state that provide access for walk-in clients. HCO services are available to all Vermonters regardless of income, resources or insurance. Currently the HCO helps about 2,500 Vermonters annually.

The \$135K in grant funds will enable the HCO to expand services and better respond to the increasing number of Vermonters needing help with health care and health insurance issues. The funds will also give the HCO the ability to inform and advise Vermonters about the benefits provided by the Affordable Care Act.

Vermont consumers interested in learning more about the HCO and the services it offers can visit the HCO online at www.vtlegalaid.org or contact them toll-free at 800-917-7787.

###