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HEALTH CARE ACCESS GETS EASIER WITH NEW ACCESS POINTS IN VERMONT AND NEW HAMPSHIRE

MONTPELIER, VT – November 7, 2013 – Nearly 33,000 Vermonters will soon find access to primary and preventive care much easier now that Gifford Health Care, Mountain Health Center, and Battenkill Valley Health Center have been awarded the designation and funding to operate as Federally Qualified Health Centers. The U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced three awards funded by the Affordable Care Act of \$2.4 million to bring primary care services to thousands of people living in medically underserved areas of the state. The three new FQHCs join 8 established FQHCs in Vermont and together they provide primary care to 163,000 people.

In New Hampshire, Mid-State Health Center was designated as a Federally Qualified Health Center and awarded \$812,500 to extend medical, dental, behavioral, and lower-cost pharmacy services to their patients. Indian Stream Health Center received a grant for \$456,793 to establish a new FQHC satellite center in northeastern Essex County, VT. New Hampshire has 12 FQHCs providing primary and preventive health care services to approximately 76,000 people living in medically underserved regions of the state.

[Bi-State Primary Care Association](#) staff provided technical assistance and support to all the grant applicants to help prepare each organization to qualify and submit successful grant applications. Bi-State is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization that promotes access to effective and affordable primary care and preventive services for all, with special emphasis on underserved populations in New Hampshire and Vermont.

[Mountain Health Center](#) is located in Bristol, VT, in Addison County. “This grant will assist us in fulfilling our mission to strengthen our communities by improving the health of all our neighbors by providing health care with skill, compassion, and respect,” said Martha Halnon, executive director of Mountain Health Center. “This grant makes a huge difference in our ability to lower the barriers people face in accessing primary and preventive care. I cannot tell you how much of an impact this will be and the

incredible difference it makes in our ability to provide affordable dental services in our community! We are thrilled to be able to offer comprehensive, integrated medical, dental, and behavioral health care services, and access to lower-cost prescriptions. We want the community know we accept private insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare, offer a sliding fee to those in need, and that we are a resource to many other services necessary to make access to health care possible.”

[Gifford Health Care](#) serves sections of Addison, Orange, Rutland, Washington, and Windsor counties through 6 Community Health Center sites and a Critical Access Hospital. “We are so excited! This designation will truly transform Gifford. We are ecstatic that this opportunity will increase access to primary care, dental and mental health. And in the face of health care reform, Gifford will now be better positioned to provide the right care at the right time, as both a Critical Access Hospital and Federally Qualified Health Center. I am very grateful to the volunteer Board of Trustees and their leadership on this issue. They have committed their time and expertise to make this a reality for us and the larger community.” – Joseph Woodin, CEO

[Battenkill Valley Health Center](#) is located in Arlington, VT, in Bennington County. “To say we are ecstatic is an understatement! This is truly a life saving opportunity for the community and for the solo practice of our one physician who despite all the challenges transformed his practice into a patient-centered medical home and continued to be the kind of doctor who still goes to a patient’s home to hold their hand when they are ill,” said the former chair and current board member of Battenkill Valley Health Center, Dr. Elizabeth Wennar Rosenberg. “But, it was getting pretty tough to keep up with all the reporting and regulations and he let us know he might have to close his practice after 26 years. We were determined not to let him go and for the past 4 years, we have worked together on this dream that has finally come true! Now we’ll help develop this solo practice into a health center offering medical, dental, and behavioral health care that accepts private insurance, Medicaid and Medicare, and offers a sliding fee to those in need. At a meeting last evening several people in our community indicated they better understand the commitment to expanding the number of FQHCs in this country - not only because it is good policy, but because this expansion of primary care services includes access to behavioral care, dental care, and lower cost prescription drugs making it a model of care that is good for the communities FQHCs serve.”

[Mid-State Health Center](#) serves southeastern Grafton County with health centers in Plymouth and Bristol. "Although Mid-State has been providing services to our communities for years, this funding will allow us to institute oral health services in our Bristol office and will move our health center toward financial sustainability. We are excited to partner with HRSA, the Bureau of Primary Health Care, and Bi-State to further our mission in Central New Hampshire." - Sharon Beaty, CEO

[Indian Stream Health Center](#), Colebrook, NH serves northern Coos County, NH, and more than a 1,000 patients from Essex County, VT. According to Gail Fisher, Indian Stream Health Center’s board president and Canaan, VT, resident, “We are thrilled to receive word that our New Access Point application offered by the Health Resources and Services Administration that many people worked very hard to submit last April, has been approved. The development of a site in Canaan, which has been on our radar for some time, was actually initially identified before I even became involved in the health center. As a Canaan resident, I am, of course, extremely excited that this site will finally become a reality.”

With offices in Vermont and New Hampshire, [Bi-State Primary Care Association](#) works with federal, state, and regional health policy organizations, foundations, and payers to develop strategies, policies, and programs that provide and support community-based primary health care services in medically underserved areas. Bi-State is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization that promotes access to effective and affordable primary care and preventive services for all, with special emphasis on underserved populations in New Hampshire and Vermont.

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