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**Vermont Residents Benefit from \$2.2 Million Grant for Health Information Technology**

MONTPELIER, VT - June 7, 2010 - Over the course of past year, Bi-State Primary Care Association (Bi-State) worked with health center members on a competitive grant proposal to Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). On June 3, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced that Bi-State would receive a grant award of \$2,226,278. The funds are part of the \$2 billion allocated under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to expand health care services to low-income and uninsured individuals through its health center program.

"This is great news for Bi-State and great news for Vermont," said Governor Jim Douglas. "Vermont is recognized as a national leader in the alignment and integration of Health Information Technology, Health Information Exchange, and reform of the health care delivery system. We stand ready to expand adoption and connectivity statewide. The grant Bi-State received will create the network and technical assistance necessary to further that goal."

The varying rates of adoption of Electronic Health Records (EHR) software and the different programs in use around the country has made it impossible to share data across platforms from one practice to the next. This grant is an investment in the Health Information Exchange (HIE) system that is necessary to enable health records to be shared. It will also be possible to populate the statewide Clinical Data Repository (CDR) with patient data from all eight VT health centers through the State's Health Information Exchange Network (HIEN).

Patients benefit when records can be shared electronically. When a doctor cannot access the results of lab tests, MRIs, and procedures already performed on a patient at a different location, the tests often have to be repeated. With electronic records, all relevant patient information is immediately available. Health centers across the country provide primary health care to nearly 19 million patients - a number expected to double over the next five years as more people gain greater access to the health insurance they need to access affordable care.

"This two-year project will enable health centers to conduct quality improvement activities and will ensure their maximum participation in state and federal health care reform opportunities, including a role in the forefront of the statewide expansion of the Vermont Blueprint for Health," noted Bi-State's Executive Director, Tess Stack Kuenning. "All eight health centers are members of the Vermont Rural Health Alliance (a program of Bi-State Primary Care Association), a Health Center Controlled Network." Vermont's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) include Community Health Center of Burlington, Community Health Centers of the Rutland Region, The Health Center (Plainfield), Community Health Services of the Lamoille Valley, Little Rivers Health Care, Northern Counties Health Care, Northern Tier Center for Health, Springfield Medical Care Systems, Inc.

With offices in Concord, NH, and Montpelier, VT, Bi-State is a nonprofit organization that works with federal, state, and regional health policy organizations and policymakers, foundations, and payers to develop strategies, policies, and programs that promote and sustain community-based, primary health care services for all. More information is available at: [www.bistatepca.org](http://www.bistatepca.org).

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