



For Immediate Release
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Office of the Healthcare Advocate Recovers \$2.5 Million for Healthcare Consumers in Second Quarter 2013

Victoria Veltri, State Healthcare Advocate, announced today that the Office of the Healthcare Advocate (OHA), the independent state agency that assists consumers with health plan issues, generated \$2.5 million in savings for Connecticut healthcare consumers in the second quarter of 2013. The \$2.5 million represents the costs of healthcare services, procedures and claims that would have been borne directly by consumers of healthcare, had the agency not intervened.

OHA's model includes direct intervention via advocacy with health plans on denials of coverage for medical necessity, experimental/investigational status, and non medical necessity issues such as unwarranted billing actions or coding errors and non covered services determinations. OHA works *solely* on health issues, and its consumer recovery total reflects savings from intervention in fully-insured and self-funded health plans.

The \$2.5 million savings total includes OHA's successful appeals of complex mental health treatment denials of medically necessary inpatient psychiatric care for adolescents and several complex medical cases. Including savings from previous quarters, OHA's savings total for fiscal year 2013 is \$8.5 million.

In the second quarter of 2013, OHA added \$350,000 in savings to the over \$2 million previously saved during FY 2013 under its partnership with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The partnership ensures that payment for services for children whose parents have private health coverage is exhausted under private coverage before the state pays for services.

Veltri noted that the savings total for the second quarter of 2013 remains high despite the dramatic increase in 2013 in the number of cases in which OHA has providing only education or counseling.

In the second quarter of 2013, OHA opened 1792 cases, ***the highest number of opened cases in a single quarter since OHA began operations in 2001***. OHA also closed 1399 cases in the first quarter. In addition to direct advocacy, OHA also:

- Released a five part webcast series on consumer rights under the Affordable Care Act
- Conducted 68 outreach events for hundreds of people with community organizations, small businesses, town health departments and provider groups

- Negotiated key provisions of Public Act 13-3 concerning reforms to the utilization review statutes related to mental health and substance use
- Conducted a webinar training for providers on the Affordable Care Act
- Successfully kicked off the navigator and in-person assister outreach and enrollment program under the Affordable Care Act in partnership with Access Health CT
- Conducted a spring media campaign attracting new customers to OHA for assistance in understanding their healthcare rights
- Undertook project direction of Connecticut's \$2.8 million State innovation Model Initiative (SIM) grant
- Received an \$85,000 grant from the Connecticut Health Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the pay for performance strategies of the Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership

Veltri said, "More than ever, healthcare consumers, providers, businesses and legislators are turning to OHA for trusted and real time advocacy. In a time when healthcare is evolving, the demand for the kind of services we provide, which range from real time consumer education and assistance in selecting a plan to direct advocacy in the grievance and appeal processes, is increasing exponentially.

"As our feedback survey results show, our clients consistently praise the OHA staff for the expert and timely advocacy they provide.

"OHA is the federally recognized consumer assistance program under the Affordable Care Act, and therefore, OHA will play a key role in outreach, education and advocacy for new enrollees in healthcare coverage in 2014. OHA expects to receive an increasing number of referrals for consumer assistance beyond our existing and burgeoning case volume."

Consumers who need assistance can call 1-866-466-4446, or e-mail OHA at healthcare.advocate@ct.gov.

For general information, Veltri recommends that consumers visit OHA at www.ct.gov/oha, at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/State-of-Connecticut-Office-of-the-Healthcare-Advocate/301102456997?ref=hl> and on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/stateofctoaha>.

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