

**For Immediate Release**

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**Vermont Health Care System Earns Top Ranking**

**Waterbury** – Vermont’s health care system has been ranked first in the US by the Commonwealth Fund. The ranking appears in the 2017 edition of the Fund’s *Aiming Higher: Results from the Commonwealth Fund Scorecard on State Health System Performance*. Designed as a scorecard, the report looks “to compare and evaluate trends in health care access, quality, avoidable hospital use and costs, health outcomes, and health system equity across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.”

This is the fifth scorecard published by the Fund that examines state health system performance. Earlier scorecards were published in 2007, 2009, 2014 and 2015. Vermont has consistently earned high scores in past Commonwealth Fund reports, ranking second in the nation in the 2015 edition.

Among the key findings in the 2017 scorecard, Commonwealth Fund data showed that nearly all states demonstrated more improvements than they did areas of decline between 2013 – 2015. Two categories that saw the largest gains were in health insurance coverage and the ability to access care when it was needed. Additionally, results indicated the most improvement among states that had expanded their Medicaid programs.

Vermont ranked #1 overall and first in three key dimensions used to determine the rankings:

1. Access and Affordability
2. Prevention and Treatment
3. Avoidable Use and Cost

Some highlights about Vermont’s health care system from the 2017 scorecard include the state having:

- The third lowest percentage of uninsured adults (ages 19-64)
  - Tied with Hawaii and Minnesota
- Strong outcomes related to children’s health
  - Highest percentage of children with a medical home
  - Highest percentage of children with medical and dental care preventive visits
  - Highest percentage of children who received needed mental health care
- The second lowest percentage of adults who went without care because of cost (9% in Vermont vs 13% national avg)
- Percentage of obese adults below national avg (25% vs. 29%)

The scorecard also indicated outcomes where Vermont needs to improve, such as infant mortality and the state’s suicide rates, both of which are above the national average. Nationally, there is also a trend

showing decreased life expectancy, something the Fund attributes to increased deaths from heart disease and other chronic conditions, as well as fatalities from opioid and alcohol abuse. Of note, Vermont's recently approved All-Payer Model has set targets for improving outcomes related to the prevalence of chronic disease, as well as mortality due to suicide and substance abuse.

"The results published by the Commonwealth Fund represent good news for Vermonters and speak to Vermont's hard work, innovation, and leadership in the areas of health care system reform, public health programming, and addressing key social determinants of health," said Al Gobeille, Secretary of the Agency of Human Services. "We have made solid progress in many important areas over the last several years and, while we know that there is always room for improvement and there are outcomes where we need to do better, I applaud the efforts of our dedicated health care professionals and advocates, as well as Vermont citizens and patients who are equally committed to seeing improved health outcomes for all Vermonters; efforts that are reflected in this ranking."

The complete *Aiming Higher* scorecard can be found on the Commonwealth Fund website at <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/interactives/2017/mar/state-scorecard/>

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