

# ***VERMONT2011***

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## *Licensure of Physicians to Provide Pro Bono Services in Vermont*

A Status Report  
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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
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## Licensure of Physicians to Provide Pro Bono Services in Vermont: A Status Report

In accordance with Section 54 of Act 103 of the 2009 Adjourned session, the Department of Health submits the following status report on the Board of Medical Practice's facilitation of granting licenses to physicians who limit their practice in Vermont to the provision of *pro bono* services at free or reduced-fee health care clinics, while assuring that physicians receiving *pro bono* licenses meet all the standards required of physicians fully licensed to practice in Vermont.

### Overview of Physician Licensing in Vermont

Generally, physicians seeking initial licensure in Vermont must pass an examination, participate in an interview, pay a fee of \$625.00 and provide credentials for verification. A physician who is licensed and in good standing in Vermont or another state, and who is interested in providing only *pro bono* services in Vermont, may apply for a license to do so under provisions set out in 26 VSA §1395(c). Under that statute, a physician who agrees to limit his or her practice to *pro bono* services may obtain licensure without further examination, interview or fee, and only needs to complete the application and provide credentials for verification. This process ensures that each applicant for licensure is qualified to practice medicine in Vermont, whether pursuant to an unrestricted license or a *pro bono* license.

The physician licensing process will be transitioning later this year to an electronic system that will allow online filing of applications. This new system will bring important efficiencies to the processing of applications for all licensees.

### **Efforts to Simplify the *Pro Bono* Licensure Process**

The provisions for licensing *pro bono* physicians have been in place since 2002, when 26 VSA § 1395 was amended. Over the past year, the staff focused on streamlining the *pro bono* application process and, in particular, the credential verification process.

In response to input that one Vermont *pro bono* clinic sees New Hampshire as an important source for volunteer physicians, the staff gave extra attention to opportunities to ease the credential verification process for physicians who practice in New Hampshire. New Hampshire requires applicants to use a nationwide credentialing service. Vermont also accepts credential verification from that service, so many New Hampshire physicians will be able to provide credentials with very little effort. Vermont staff will coordinate directly with New Hampshire licensing officials to the extent possible.

In addition, a special page of instructions to assist *pro bono* applicants was created on the Board of Medical Practice web site. A contact number is also provided, with an invitation to call the staff for assistance with the process. The staff will be glad to assist any physician seeking *pro bono* licensure in Vermont.

### **Data on Physicians Licensed for *Pro Bono* Work in Vermont**

The number of physicians with *pro bono* licensure increased substantially during the past year. At the conclusion of the bi-annual relicensing process conducted in late 2010, the total number of physicians licensed under the special provision of 26 VSA § 1395(c) was 13. That was a notable increase from earlier levels, when the total had been just one or two.

Some notable facts about these 13 licensees are:

- 11 of the 13 are currently licensed in New Hampshire.
- 12 of the 13 physicians practice with the same organization, the Good Neighbor Health Clinic in White River Junction, Vermont

## Conclusion

The procedures in place to accommodate applicants for *pro bono* licensure appear to be effective and will be even more efficient in the next licensing period with the new electronic system. Given the need to verify appropriately the credentials of physicians licensed by Vermont, the Board of Medical Practice must continue to obtain credentials and have all physicians complete the Vermont application for licensure. These procedures ensure that all physicians practicing in Vermont meet the same qualifications, whether a fee is charged for their services or whether care is delivered in a traditional or *pro bono* clinic.

Additional information about the licensing process may be requested from David Herlihy, Director of the Board of Medical Practice at the Vermont Department of Health. (802) 657-4220, [david.herlihy@ahs.state.vt.us](mailto:david.herlihy@ahs.state.vt.us).