

STATE AUDITOR DOUG HOFFER

Press Release

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Auditor Doug Hoffer Alerts Vermonters to Health Care Price Transparency Tools

MONTPELIER, VT – Vermont State Auditor Doug Hoffer today encouraged all Vermonters to utilize the health care price transparency tools that enable them to seek medical care at the best price and announced that he has put every Vermont hospital’s price estimator tool in one location on his State Auditor website.

The Legislature, [partly motivated by a report issued by the Auditor’s Office](#), required commercial health insurers like [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont](#) and [MVP](#) to provide detailed price information on their websites for their policyholders to utilize. Once you enter these portals, access to which is limited to each insurer’s members, policyholders can see what they can expect to pay for a particular procedure at nearby facilities. In addition, as of January 1, 2021 the federal government now [requires](#) every hospital to have a publicly accessible website showing its price for as many as 300 “shoppable” procedures.

“With these new tools,” Auditor Hoffer said, “Vermonters no longer have to pay *any price* for medical care, they can pay the *best price*. In doing so, Vermonters can take some control of the cost of their health care.”

Hoffer offered the following illustration: “Imagine you need a joint replacement, and you live equidistant between two Vermont hospitals, each of which performs knee replacements with no significant difference in the quality of their performance. In fact, procedures performed at the two hospitals are identical in all ways but one – the price. One facility typically charges \$26,000 for a joint replacement, and the other charges \$36,000. Which facility will you choose?”

“Many Vermonters’ health insurance policies will cover most of the tab. However, if you own a self-insured small business the difference between the two hospitals is \$10,000 of your money! Same with a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA). Your employee may not have a direct financial interest in choosing the lower priced option, but you sure have an incentive to equip him or her with the price differences. The employer may even wish to offer a cash incentive to utilize the lower cost provider, putting cash in the employee’s pocket while keeping more cash in the business’s bank account. For Vermonters who do not have any health insurance, the importance of this price information is even more vital for high-cost procedures like joint replacements. It could be the difference between seeking care or not, and between going bankrupt or not!”

The Auditor’s website now has links to [all fourteen Vermont hospitals’ price transparency tools](#). A link to the Dartmouth-Hitchcock tool is also provided.

“Small businesses and families work very hard for their money,” Hoffer added. “These insurer and hospital price transparency tools mean we have the information to avoid paying substantially

more money for the exact same medical service. Ultimately, though, the value of these tools is in direct relation to the frequency with which Vermonters use them. So I strongly encourage Vermonters to put this information to work for them.”

To find a Vermont hospital’s price transparency tool, [please click here](#), or go to <https://auditor.vermont.gov/content/hospital-price-transparency-pages>.