

# Employee Benefit/ Managed Care Briefs

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## **Vermont health premiums to rise**

MONTPELIER — Health insurance rates for many Vermonters will be going up at the start of October, state officials said.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont is seeking rate increases of about 15 percent for its managed-care plans.

Consumers of MVP Health Plan, the Schenectady, N.Y.-based managed-care plan, will start to see a rate increase of 3.7 percent on Oct. 1, with prescription drug coverage going up 27.3 percent. The company has also told regulators it plans to seek a 6.9 percent increase for policies that renew next year.

The only major health insurer that reported a rate decrease was CIGNA Healthcare, whose rates will drop 3.3 percent. Officials at BISHCA said the company received a substantial rate hike last year. □

## **Harvard Pilgrim rates highest**

Wellesley, MA — Harvard Pilgrim Health Care is the only health plan in the country to be rated among the top 10 for both member satisfaction and clinical effectiveness according to a report from the National Committee for Quality Assurance. □

## **Mass. to cover unborn children**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Massachusetts is the fifth state to get federal approval to extend state health insurance to pregnant women and their unborn children.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson approved a Massachusetts plan to expand coverage to low income women through the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Other states that have done this are Rhode Island, Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota. □

## **UnitedHealth buys Golden Rule**

INDIANAPOLIS — UnitedHealth Group will reportedly acquire Golden Rule Financial Corp., a company that pioneered medical savings accounts, a Golden Rule official told Associated Press.

United Health Group spokesman Michael Strand would neither confirm nor deny the report. But Associated Press quoted Michael Corne, a Golden Rule spokesman and the company's vice president of health products, as confirming that Golden Rule and UnitedHealth have reached "a firm agreement" subject to review by several regulatory agencies.

Corne said Golden Rule did not agree to the deal because of any financial problems. "I think it is important to note this is not a merger of necessity. It is a merger of opportunity," he said. □