



For Immediate Release  
Contact: Jill Sudhoff-Guerin  
(802) 917-5817  
jsudhoffguer@vtmd.org

## **Vermont Medical Society Members Adopt 2022 Policy Prioritizing Primary Care**

**Montpelier, Vt.** (Nov. 9, 2021) – This November, Vermont Medical Society (VMS) members adopted four policy resolutions to address the priority issues for the State’s physicians. VMS is the largest physician and physician assistant organization in the State and meets annually to adopt policies relevant to the health of Vermonters. The 2022 policies, which focus on equitable access to audio only telehealth services, primary care, home health and hospice and pediatric mental health services, reaffirms VMS’ members commitment to care for our communities. These policies reflect the high priority Vermont’s physicians place on improving access to health care for their patients, lowering health care costs and reducing administrative burdens on Vermont clinicians.

The first 2021 policy supports coverage for audio-only health care coverage. The second policy is a multifaceted resolution prioritizing primary care through increasing reimbursement, bolstering the health care workforce and increasing primary care engagement in payment reform. The third policy calls for increased access to home health and hospice services and the final resolution provides strategies to address pediatric mental health needs in Vermont.

VMS members approved these resolutions during the organization’s 208<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, held virtually on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021. VMS resolutions are catalysts for the organization’s legislative efforts and these resolutions will inform the organization’s public policy efforts on behalf of its 2,400 physician and physician assistant members. [Click here for the full text of the resolutions](#). In summary, these are the adopted resolutions:

### **Call to Prioritize Primary Care**

VMS members unanimously supported a comprehensive policy recommending specific mechanisms to strengthen and sustain Vermont's primary care system.

This multi-dimensional resolution calls for:

- Ongoing, sustainable Medicaid payments for primary care services by keeping Medicaid rates the same as Medicare;
- Increasing the percent of commercial payer and Medicare spending on primary care services;
- Increasing upfront investments to support practices participating in payment reform programs;
- All payers to reimburse at 100% of in-person rates for clinically-appropriate, equivalent audio-only telehealth services;
- Reducing administrative burden through streamlining and reducing prior authorizations;
- Bolstering primary care workforce by supporting ongoing funding for Vermont's new primary care medical student scholarship program and increase funding for loan forgiveness programs;
- Adding a Chief Medical Officer of Primary Care position to the Green Mountain Care Board.

### **Coverage for Audio-Only Health Care Services**

VMS members supported a policy pledging to continue to advocate on the state and federal level for coverage by Medicaid, Medicare and commercial insurers of all medically necessary, clinically appropriate health care services delivered by audio-only telephone and for such services to be paid for at the equivalent rate to in-person services.

### **Support for Increased Access to Home Health and Hospice Services**

VMS members adopted a resolution that supports working in collaboration with Vermont home health and hospice agencies to advocate for consistent access to quality, home care services in every region of the State. This policy calls for

adequate reimbursement for Vermont's home health and hospice agencies and for health care professionals who provide home visits; expanded eligibility and coverage for home health services, including telehealth services under the Medicare program, and coverage for telemonitoring services by all payers so that all Vermonters who would be best served by health care delivered in the home can receive services in that setting.

### **Addressing Pediatric Mental Health Needs in Vermont**

VMS members voted in favor of a policy calling on the VMS to work with partners such as the American Academy of Pediatrics Vermont Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians Vermont Chapter, Vermont Academy of Family Physicians, Vermont Psychiatric Association, Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems and Vermont Department of Mental Health to advocate for sustainable & appropriate funding for a comprehensive approach to children's mental health in Vermont, including both short-term measures to alleviate the current acute crisis of children waiting for services in emergency departments as well as longer-term interventions to support pediatric mental health services inside and outside the hospital setting.

[Click here for the 2020 VMS Resolutions](#)

**About the Vermont Medical Society:** The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to protecting the health of all Vermonters and improving the environment in which Vermont physicians and physician assistants practice medicine. The Society serves its 2,400 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit [www.VTMD.org](http://www.VTMD.org).