

**UNITED COUNSELING SERVICE  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2014-2019**

**PROCEDURAL PREFACE**

On December 19, 2007, the Board of Directors of United Counseling Service authorized the creation of a first five-year strategic plan. On June 10, 2008, this plan was approved.

On April 17, 2013, the Board of Directors authorized the creation of the second five-year strategic plan. Strategic Planning Committee members, consisting of Division Directors Lorna Mattern, Jill Doyle, and Leslie Addison; and Board of Directors Joanna Mintzer, David Ballou and Angela Arbolino, were appointed by Executive Director Ralph Provenza, and Board President Bob Thompson, respectively.

The Committee has held a number of meetings resulting in this updated Strategic Plan. On September 11, 2013, an all-day Board of Directors and Senior Management Retreat was held to discuss and review the final draft Plan. It was approved.

During the 2017 Division Directors' Retreat, followed by the 2017 Board and Senior Management Retreat, the following components of the Strategic Plan were reviewed and updated to incorporate the values of Centers of Excellence: Finance, Client Services, Facilities, Human Resources and Community Relations. A section was also added for Information Technology.

**INTRODUCTION**

United Counseling Service (the Agency) deservedly enjoys a fine reputation as the State of Vermont Designated Agency for Bennington County. The Agency is committed to providing a high standard of quality care. To this end we will keep current with industry best practices and become a certified Center of Excellence by embedding the five core values: World Class Customer Service, Comprehensive Care, Easy Access, Excellent Outcomes and Excellent Value and infusing the values of ICARE: Ideal Service, Culture of Caring, Accountability, Responsiveness and Empowerment into the culture of UCS.

The Agency faces a host of potential threats to its ability to continue to provide both its present quality and level of programs and maintain sound employee relations, remuneration and practices. The focus of this Plan is to meet this very challenging host of threats. These challenges include difficulty hiring and keeping psychiatric medical doctors, reorganization of the entire medical insurance programs and health care reform on both a national and state level, reorganization of the departments within the Agency of Human Services on a state level, and continuous threats of rescissions in the state and federal budgets.

The overall goal of the Strategic Plan is to provide a roadmap to be followed by the Agency and its Board, in their efforts to achieve its Mission in spite of these challenging threats. The Mission statement was updated in February 2015 and now states:

*Building a stronger community by empowering individuals and families to live healthy and meaningful lives.*

Of course, the Mission is subject to modification by the Board.

The functional purpose of the Plan is threefold: First, to provide better strategic guidance to management; Second, to facilitate more meaningful exercise of the Board's oversight and inquiry functions; Third, to facilitate a strategic partnership between management and the Board. With respect to these functions: See, **Governance as Leadership, Reframing the Work of Nonprofit Boards**, Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005).

The Plan establishes certain key value judgments and consequent directions to management. **The Plan must be reviewed annually and amended as changing circumstances dictate.**

Depending upon the funding levels and the continuing ability of the Agency to hire and retain adequate professional and direct care employees, the effect of implementing this Plan may be to reduce programming in the short-term in order to permit long-term sustainability of the Agency.

The Plan includes establishing strategic goals for Finance, Customer Services, Facilities and Health Safety, Information Technology, Human Resources and Community Relations and Development.

## FINANCE

The Agency is faced with uncertainty regarding the adequacy of funding, as well as a demographic projection of a population that will become older, less healthy and have fewer economic resources in Bennington and in Bennington County, during 2014-2019, the period of this Plan.

There is a real possibility that in the future the state will no longer allow any program's underutilized monies to subsidize other services. Further, the state will likely impose additional funding and expenditure restrictions. This may include limits on allowed days of net asset reserve.

Vermont is also facing a major change in the way health care is delivered and financed. This will also create a challenging landscape of funding. We should be aware of changes from the Fee for Service method to Per Member Per Month/Case Rate/Capitation funding.

The future of the Affordable Care Act is uncertain; however, the State continues to move towards working within Affordable Care Organizations such as OneCare. UCS will continue to be an active participant in this process. We need to be flexible enough to be prepared for these changes.

The Board cannot allow the Agency to operate at a cash loss. The Board requires a budget plan, and later for each year an actual performance, that in the Board's judgment permits

sustainability of the Agency. Thus, **the Board will exercise heightened scrutiny of program components that jeopardize the sustainability of the Agency.**

The Agency, in order to best advise the Board, will assess and then advise the Board as to the methods being used and contemplated in order to **optimally achieve all mission functions, including “community wide education, prevention, and early intervention,”** by maximizing revenues and minimizing expenditures. To this end, we have developed five goals:

1. Earn all available funds from our payers.
2. Determine the true cost of providing care and eliminating waste from services and administration costs.
3. Explore additional opportunities for partnerships to increase revenue.
4. Create internal process efficiencies including automation where possible.
5. In collaboration with Human Resources, conduct a compensation project leading to the development of a salary and benefit structure.

### **CUSTOMER SERVICES**

In order to achieve clinical excellence, the Agency will continue to provide and improve quality care in Bennington County with a clear vision of how care and healing can be best delivered through the lens of meaningful outcome measures including overall client health and wellness. To this end, we have developed five goals:

1. Develop meaningful outcome measures for all client populations.
2. Create a culture of health and wellness in our client programming.
3. Provide easy access to the right care at the right time.
4. The Agency will actively recruit and hire staff with the appropriate credentials to fill the current needs, such as clinical professionals, nurse practitioners, LADC, and CSW.
5. Agency leadership will continue to seek collaborative partnerships with primary care offices, schools, corrections, police and Southwestern Vermont Medical Center.

### **FACILITIES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Agency will continue to report to the Board about current space utilization and anticipated needs and will review and monitor client, staff and visitor safety to include:

1. Organizational moves, personnel transfers, and client needs within existing space without required renovation with minimal renovations and considering rental alternatives as appropriate. Any purchase of a property or major renovations with Board approval
2. The Agency will continue to create and implement a complete facility energy efficiency plan, as well as other actions, to reduce its overall environmental footprint.

3. Ensure staff and client safety by following best practices and remaining in compliance with all safety regulations.
4. Create a critical response team.
5. Conduct a space utilization review and create a plan accordingly.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

During the term of this Plan, the Agency will continue to determine how to **better benefit from increased retention of the skills and experience of senior employees** by length of service and/or position and to recruit talented and qualified staff. To this end the Agency will consider but not be limited to the following:

1. Minimize the risk of future talent gaps and promote the continuity of knowledge through:
  - a. Senior staff succession planning.
  - b. Conduct a compensation review.
  - c. Implement strategies to retain talented and qualified employees and minimize the loss of long-term employees by utilizing data collected from:
    - i. Exit Interviews
    - ii. Turnover Reports
    - iii. Stay Interviews
    - iv. Staff Satisfaction Surveys
    - v. Performance Reviews
  - d. Create and implement an agency-wide staff development and training plan.
  - e. Strengthen our ability to attract, hire and retain qualified staff by:
    - i. Promoting who we are.
      1. As a great place to work and a great place to get care.
      2. Our benefit package, highlighting soft benefits.
      3. What makes our community a great place to live.
  - f. Strengthening the practice and success of promotion from within.
  - g. Create a partnership with graduate schools.

## IT

UCS recognizes the need to enhance the IT infrastructure and applications to improve customer service, provide reliable and efficient technology, increase employee productivity and modernize the electronic medical record. We increase our risk of a security breach of our client and agency data as we enhance our IT infrastructure, therefore it becomes increasingly important to follow all industry norms and security best practices. We have developed the following goals:

1. The implementation of Office 365.
2. The implementation of an Intranet utilizing SharePoint.
3. Increase staff awareness around cyber security risk.
4. The implementation of the unified electronic medical record.
5. Increase the ability for staff to work remotely.

6. In collaboration with other divisions, increase process efficiency and effectiveness.

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

The priority of Community Relations and Development continues to be **extending and deepening both the outreach and visibility of the work, efficacy and importance of the Agency in the community**. To this end the Board voted on May 15, 2013, to shift the direction of the Community Relations Department as follows:

1. Community Education as a major area of focus for the department will include Branding, visibility, prevention and an increased focus on marketing UCS as a Center of Excellence in community mental health.
  - a. Continue the utilization of social media.
  - b. Creative ways of promotion through television (GNAT, CAT TV).
  - c. Development and implementation of agency brochures throughout the community.
  - d. Development and implementation of agency information packets for Board members and Division Directors.
  - e. Host community forums including:
    - i. Reviewing our year.
    - ii. Annual Conference
    - iii. Educational Films
2. Annual Fundraising which includes an annual mailing, personal follow up and outreach activities.
3. Events that are profitable and relate to our mission statement and our Strategic Plan.

### MOVING FORWARD

**UCS will be a certified Center of Excellence in providing a high standard of quality care through the realization of the Strategic Plan.**

The members of the Strategic Planning Committee **hope this Plan will precipitate a significantly greater focus by both the Board and Management about the strategic goals of the Agency in meeting its present significant challenges**. Further, the principal focus each year at the annual Senior Management-Board Retreat will be the progress of the Agency towards meeting the Strategic Plan in the prior year, and discussing plans for doing so in the forthcoming year.

The Strategic Plan will be an integral part of our agency operations and will be shared with our staff, community partners and stakeholders. Further we will develop agency-wide goals through the lens of the Strategic Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Arbolino  
David Ballou

**UNITED COUNSELING SERVICE - STRATEGIC PLAN - 2014-2019**

Joanna Mintzer  
Leslie Addison  
Jill Doyle  
Lorna Mattern

2017 Review and Update by the UCS Executive Director, Division Directors and Members of the Board of Directors

*Revised October 2017*

*Approved by the Board of Directors on November 15, 2017*