Access to Care Strategies

By Amy Fela, Director of Operations

As a Designated Agency for the State of Vermont and a Certified Center of Excellence, UCS strives to attain the value of Easy Access, which is simply defined as providing the right care, at the right time, in the right place with the right provider.

Access to mental health care services is a priority focus area of UCS’ strategic planning. Individuals who are seeking mental health treatment are often waiting six to eight weeks for an intake appointment, followed by an extended wait time for clinical services. Emergency Departments across the State of Vermont have seen an increase in utilization rates by people experiencing a mental health crisis, both children and adults, including our very own Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC). Often patients who are seen in the Emergency Department are discharged back into the community to receive community-based supports.

UCS is responding to the need for timely mental health services in Bennington County in the following ways:
- UCS implemented Universal Access which is the first point of contact for all individuals who reach out to us looking for services.
- Universal Access Coordinators collect basic information from callers and schedule an intake appointment.

In addition to hiring our new Nurse Practitioner, Rachel Darby, we recently revamped our process for psychiatric referrals. This new process development was in response to the feedback that we received from our stakeholders regarding wait times, call back times and limited availability of appointments. We are pleased to see an increase in scheduling capacity and timeliness of our response rate to our referring physicians.

In partnership with SVMC, UCS has been awarded an innovation fund grant from OneCare Vermont, an Accountable Care Organization (ACO). The fund was developed with the goal of improving the quality, cost
and experience of healthcare for Vermonters. The grant will fund a Youth Psychiatric Urgent Care Center in Bennington to serve as an alternative to the emergency room for children and adolescents with an urgent mental or behavioral health issue. The partnership between UCS and SVMC will allow the opportunity to increase access to mental health services for families in our community. The Center will open in the Fall of 2019.

We are excited to share that we will be moving to a Same Day Access model for intake in the Fall of 2019. Same Day Access will allow us to provide the care individuals need, when they need it. We will be sharing additional information with you, our community over the next several months.

UCS is committed to providing the best mental healthcare services to our community.

UCS Celebrates Staff and Community

By Tiffany Tan, Bennington Banner

The Bennington Police Department and a longtime youth mentor were two community members honored at the United Counseling Service's staff recognition luncheon on Wednesday.

The nonprofit presented the police department with the Cleveland and Phyllis Dodge Community Service Award for the law enforcement agency's support of UCS's mission.

UCS Executive Director Lorna Mattern talked about the police department's participation in their children's 5k races and annual legislative event, concern for the welfare of their clients, as well as providing active shooter training.

"This past year, I have been particularly grateful for their help through several serious and credible threats to staff and the agency," Mattern told an audience of around 220 people gathered for lunch Wednesday in the social hall of Sacred Heart Saint Francis de Sales Church in Bennington......Read more.
OneCare Vermont Awards Over $500,000 in Funding to Local Communities

In 2019, OneCare Vermont (OneCare) Accountable Care Organization (ACO) anticipates awarding up to $1,000,000 in competitive grant funding, over two funding cycles, to organizations in the ACO Network and their partners, with the goal of improving the quality, cost, and experience of healthcare for Vermonters.

Sara Barry, Senior Director of Value Base Care at OneCare, shared, “Vermont has been a national leader in testing innovations in healthcare delivery and payment reform, so we’re excited to continue to push the boundaries of reform efforts through this new funding opportunity.”

In late December 2018, OneCare released the first of two requests for proposals (RFPs) for the Innovation Fund. In January 2019, 45 proposals were submitted from across 11 of Vermont’s 14 counties, as well as from the Upper Valley in New Hampshire. The selections were made by OneCare’s Board of Managers’ Population Health Strategy Committee and approved by the Board of Managers that includes representatives from throughout the state and the full spectrum of care providers. Three proposals were selected for funding in the first round.

- Youth Psychiatric Urgent Care Model, serving the Bennington community
- Ocular Telehealth in Primary Care, serving Addison county
- Community Embedded Well Child Care for Refugee Communities, serving the Burlington community

Youth Psychiatric Urgent Care Model – The proposal, submitted by Bennington’s United Counseling Service and Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC), is to start a child psychiatric urgent care center that will serve as an alternative to the emergency room for children and adolescents with an urgent mental or behavioral health issue. “As a recipient of the Innovation Fund we are very proud to partner with SVMC to provide an urgent care option for children in crisis,” says Lorna Mattern, Executive Director of United Counseling Service. “Rather than turning to the Emergency Room, children and adolescents (and their caregivers) will access urgent mental health services in a setting that is much more appropriate for the type of care they need. The urgent care model will allow us to better meet the needs of children and adolescents in our community.”.....Read more.

Be the Mentor you wish you had. Become a Mentor Today!

Benefits of having a mentor include:
- Positive thinking
- Increased self-confidence
- Reduction in anxiety
- Forging strong relationships with others
- Learning methods to cope with stress

"Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction."
- John C. Crosby

Every child needs someone who believes in them. Mentoring provides children with the single greatest advantage they need to grow up successfully: friendship with a caring adult. Mentoring at UCS provides an opportunity for mentors and mentees to have a supported one-on-one relationship where children develop self confidence and assurance.

Research demonstrates that children who have a mentor are:
46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs
27% less likely to begin using alcohol
52% less likely to skip school
Mentoring at UCS provides training prior to being matched with a mentee with additional training throughout the year. A designated Program Coordinator is in contact with both mentors and mentees and their families providing support and guidance.

The past couple of weeks our mentors and mentees have enjoyed some fun at Otter Creek Fun Center and at Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home.

To learn more about Mentoring at UCS, contact Laurie Sallisky at (802) 442-5491 or email lsallisky@ucsvt.org.

Creating Beautiful Works of Art

Our Developmental Service Division's Community Supports Program assists individuals with various disabilities in navigating, integrating and creating meaningful connections in the community. Our clients are supported by trained staff as they learn improved social skills, how to navigate the community safely and discover community activities that enhance their lives. The Community Supports Program is designed for adults with a variety of intellectual disabilities and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder.
Participants in our Community Supports Program learn and grow in many different areas of their lives. Consumers have been participating in an art class and meet weekly to produce wonderful works of art.

Put Your Best Foot forward

We are proud to be working with Rise VT - Bennington County and Nor’east Trail Runs to promote a trail running/walking group serving those who are in recovery. There will be a kickoff meeting and Q & A on July 2nd at 5:30 at the Bennington Free Library for anyone interested in participating. For more information contact Andrea Malinowski at andrea.malinowski@svhealthcare.org.
"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

Tao Te Ching

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD
A trail running/walking group serving residents in recovery and those affected

Join us on Saturdays, July 6th through September 21st for weekly workouts.
There is no charge for weekly training program.

The goal of the program is to participate in the Beebe Farm Classic on September 26-29, 2019.
Registration for the classic is $50. Some financial aid may be available.
To sign up and to learn more contact Andrea Malinowski at 802-379-5468
or email andrea.malinowski@svhealthcare.org

Join us for a kickoff meeting and Q&A on Tuesday July 2, 2019 at 5:30pm
Bennington Free Library, 101 Silver Street

RISE VT  NO’EAST TRAIL RUNS

Snelling Center announces Early Childhood Leadership Institute Class of 2019 - Congratulations to our own Grace Winslow!
Vermont Business Magazine - The Snelling Center for government announced today the Early Childhood Leadership Institute Class of 2019. The Class of 2019 is comprised on 26 associates from across the state who represent a wide variety of organizations connected to early childhood and family work.

With Mariah McGill as the new Early Childhood Leadership Institute Director, the Class of 2019 embarked on their leadership journey last month and will meet for a total of twelve seminar days between May and October 2019. The Early Childhood Leadership Institute (ECLI) is a unique leadership and personal transformative institute designed to stimulate enthusiasm for and effective participation in efforts to improve early childhood work in Vermont; the Institute is primarily funded through a State of Vermont grant. Throughout the program, associates deepen understanding of themselves and their impact on others, share knowledge and understanding of early childhood issues, and strengthen habits of curiosity, inquiry, listening, authenticity and reflection. Read article.

Head Start/Early Head Start
2 Park Street
North Bennington, VT 05257
Phone: 802-442-3686
Locations in Bennington, North Bennington, Manchester and Pownal

Do you have a story to tell?
We would love to hear from you. Has UCS impacted your life? If you have a story you would like to share please contact Heidi French at hfrench@ucsvt.org or call (802) 442-5491 ext. 281.

Save the Date

**ANYONE. ANYWHERE. CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

**Adult Mental Health First Aid**
July 15-16, 2019
Bennington, VT
Visit UCS MHFA

**The Barn Sale**
September 21-22, 2019
Northshire Civic Center, Manchester, VT
Visit The Barn Sale
Facebook Page

**UCS Presents: Downstream**
October 25, 2019
Bennington, VT
More info coming soon.

**UCS Superhero 5K and Kids’ Dash**
November 2, 2019
Bennington, VT
More info coming soon.

For a full list of upcoming trainings and events please visit ucsvt.org.
Support from donors is vital

This year support from our donors is vital in ensuring that we continue to meet the growing needs of our community. Please consider making a donation. Your donation makes a difference and with your help we can build a stronger community.

For more information about giving, please click here to email Heidi French, Director of Community Relations and Development, or call 802-442-5491.

DONATE NOW
or
Donations can be mailed to:
United Counseling Service
PO Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201

Are you interested in a career with a great organization?

We are proud to announce that UCS has been selected as the Best Place to Work and the Best Community Service Organization for the 2019 Readers Choice award!

An established leader and provider of health and human services in Southern Vermont, United Counseling Service provides nearly 3,000 people each year with a broad range of mental health, developmental, and children’s services along with early childhood education. Approximately 300 employees are making a positive difference at 16 facilities operating throughout Bennington County.

Our employees are creative, thoughtful, energetic, forward thinking and empowered. UCS is living its mission: Building a stronger community by empowering individuals to live healthy and meaningful lives. If you want to make a difference and help those who need it most, consider joining our team. UCS is a great place to work and a great place to get care.

Check out all current openings with United Counseling Service at UCS CAREERS.

Proud to be a Center of Excellence

United Counseling Service (UCS) has been designated a Center of Excellence by Vermont Care Partners. UCS is a private, non-profit community mental health center serving Bennington County since 1958. UCS promotes healthy lifestyles through all its programs and offers care at 16 different facilities, including two primary outpatient facilities in Bennington and Manchester. UCS provides comprehensive, community-based behavioral and developmental services for children, adults, families, and seniors. UCS employs 300 people and annually serves nearly 3,000 Bennington County residents.