

# NEWSLETTER

March 20, 2020

UNITED COUNSELING SERVICE



SOMETIMES WE'RE TESTED NOT TO  
SHOW OUR WEAKNESSES, BUT TO  
DISCOVER OUR STRENGTHS.

At UCS we are prepared and here to help.



To Families, Friends and Community partners,

United Counseling Service (UCS) is taking the health of our clients, staff, families and the community extremely seriously. As Community partners we are in this together and need to work to provide the necessary care to those who need it most.

While our Head Start and Early Head Start programs are closed through April 6<sup>th</sup>, **United Counseling Service is open and providing services.** To ensure the continued safety of our staff, clients and families, we are closely monitoring and following Vermont Department of Health information, CDC and SVMC. We have increased telehealth services and are offering appointments by telephone.

We are focused on being prepared and not scared and want you to know that we are here for you as always, 24/7 and are dedicated to providing high-quality services to those that need us.

As always we are here to help and can be reached at 802.442.5491. We thank all of you who are working hard to keep our community healthy and safe.

Lorna Mattern  
Executive Director of United Counseling Service

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## Helping people with disabilities cope.

Dawn Danner, Director of Developmental Disabilities

I think it is safe to say that we are all feeling stress and anxiety from the COVID-19 outbreak. We are now forced to live in a world we never would have imagined a few months ago and it is hard to keep up with the ever-changing headlines and regulations regarding this pandemic. All of this is hard to



understand and difficult to process for the majority of us. However, if you are someone with a disability, understanding all of this information can create even greater amounts of stress. Here are a few things you can do to help alleviate anxiety for people with disabilities during this difficult time:

- Listen to concerns and validate feelings. Do not say “there’s nothing to be afraid of” because this is a scary time and people have the right to feel afraid.
- Explain things in simple, easy to understand language using the person’s primary mode of communication. Visit [www.gmsavt.org](http://www.gmsavt.org) for a plain language booklet to help people understand the virus and how to stay safe.
- Understand that those with disabilities do not always accept change easily and disrupted routines can cause more

stress. Try to engage them in new activities to replace what they have lost such as going out with friends, eating out, and working. Keeping people busy helps to keep their mind off the stressors.

- Choose to not expose an individual with a disability to the news every night. It is likely too much to process and will just create more fear.
- Be patient. For those with a limited ability to understand what is happening right now, they may act out more or become depressed. For some, they may only know that everything they love to do has been taken away; and they may not understand *why*.
- Use social media and video apps to ensure the individual stays connected with those they are missing
- Caregivers need to ensure they are taking care of themselves as well. The current situation might mean less breaks for you and you can only provide great care when you are taking care of yourself.
- Reach out to United Counseling Services Developmental Services Division at 802-445-7318. We are open and here to help those struggling during this difficult time.

People with disabilities may be at very high risk of catching the virus, especially if they already have underlying health conditions. They will likely need extra time to process and understand information and will need to know that the social distancing is not because they have done something wrong; but because we are all trying to do something right – a very hard concept for all of us right now.

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## Taking care of yourself at this time is important.



If there were ever a time to be reminded that we are all in this together it would be now. Reaching out to people you trust is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety, depression, loneliness, and boredom during social distancing, quarantine and isolation. You can use the telephone, email, text message and social media to connect with others.

**We will get through this!**

## Additional Resources

[Vermont Department of Health](#)

[Center for Disease Control](#)

[Southern Vermont Medical Center](#)

# SVMC COVID-19 Info Hotline

# 802-440-8844



## Head Start/Early Head Start

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

We are supporting our families.



On March 15 at 3:20 p.m., Governor Scott announced that statewide school closure will occur no later than Wednesday, March 18, 2020. We are working with United Counseling Service and our staff to help families through school closings. Our primary concern is the wellbeing of our students, families and employees.

**We closed for all students Wednesday, March 18th** but we do want you to know that we are committed to find ways to help our families children during this time away from our programs.

We are offering our families the following services:

### **HEALTH**

WIC support services can be signed up for by calling 447-3531.

Summer Meals Programs are open in our community. At the time of this memo, the drop-off or pick-up sites are not known. We will share the information on our Facebook page when we learn more about the locations.

### **EDUCATION/ DISABILITIES**

We are using our new Ready Rosie app that families signed up for over the last two months to send out activities that can be completed while at home.

### **FAMILY SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION**

Our Family Support staff will contact families on a regular basis.

We will be using several methods of communication to contact our families. These are difficult times for us all. I know that as a caring Head Start and Early Head Start community we will work together and help each other to be safe and well.

Our Head Start leadership is committed to assisting families and please reach out to us if you have any concerns or need individual assistance, **UCS is also offering expanded support services so if you need these services just let a staff member know or call 442-5491.**

Thank you for your patience and flexibility and we will keep in touch as plans move forward.

We are all focused on being prepared, not scared and we know our best protection is compassion.

We all hope you will be well and be able to provide care and programming starting again April 6<sup>th</sup>.

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn  
Director of Early Childhood Services

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