We are all in this together. We will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will follow guidance from public health officials and government agencies, so we can continue to support our community.

We are here for you.

Dear Community,

During this public health crisis, United Counseling Service is prepared to serve our clients with mental health, substance use disorder, and intellectual and developmental disability needs.

The health of our consumers and employees is of the utmost importance to UCS. We have taken measures to minimize the risk of exposure of COVID-19 to our staff, clients and the community. Non-essential staff are working from home and we have implemented several measures to remain connected with our clients including offering telehealth and telephonic options as well as remote access to the Emergency Room for screening and evaluations.

We are currently working with Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) to develop a plan to keep people who are in mental health crisis out of the Emergency Department (ED) and come directly to UCS for help. In an effort to keep children out of the ED, Family
Emergency Services (FES) and Psychiatric Urgent Care for Kids (PUCK) hours have been increased to offer services 7 days a week from 8 am-8 pm. At this time, all services are offered remotely using telehealth or telephonic options. Clinical workers can speak with children and families via phone or video conference and aid parents in de-escalating children in crisis. In addition, if necessary, sensory tools and information packets can be dropped off to families to use with youth who are having issues self-regulating.

Additionally, our Early Childhood Services is providing childcare to a limited number of families who are essential workers at SVMC. Our group homes are fully staffed, and guidelines have been put in place to minimize risk, including no visitors and closely monitoring the health of staff and residents.

With the rapidly changing scene, we will keep the community current on changes to our services. The health of our clients, employees and community members is of the utmost importance to UCS. But know we are here to help and can be reached at 802.442.5491.

Lorna Mattern
Executive Director, United Counseling Service

How to protect your mental health at this difficult time.
by Keilli Trottier, UCS Youth and Family Services Clinical Manager

During times of uncertainty and change, many people will experience anxiety and stress. Add in social distancing and quarantine and mental health could quickly fly out of control. However, there are ways to help protect our mental health and the mental health of children as we continue to face COVID-19 and the fall outs from this.

Tips:
1. Limit Media- Continuous use of the internet and watching the news with all the uncertainty, change and misinformation will increase anxiety and stress. While we want to stay up to date on the facts, there is no need to be on news sites or scrolling through other internet resources 24/7.

2. Use Technology to connect to others- Technology has advanced so that we can stay connected through a phone call, text, message, facetime, zoom, and Google Duo and all without breaking social distancing recommendations of staying 6 feet or more from others. Seeing others virtually face to face can help ease isolation and allow for connection.

3. Look after your physical health- Continue to ensure regular sleeping and eating patterns. Take medications as prescribed and ensure that you are getting regular physical activity. Taking care of your physical health helps to maintain mental health.
4. Set a routine—particularly with children home from schools and daycare or families working from home, it is important to set up daily routines. Children and adults feel less anxiety and stress when they know what to expect and have some predictability. This will ease emotional reactivity from children that may struggle more with transitions and change.

5. Get outside—social distancing doesn’t allow for playdates and indoor use of recreation facilities. However, we live in an area with lots of parks, trails, back yards, mountains etc. Take a walk, explore with your children, play outside. Fresh air and exercise help to ease mental health symptoms as well as allow for more space for families that are home together.

6. Utilize natural ways to teach children at home. Homeschooling children can feel overwhelming and a daunting task. Use alternative ways to learn such as cooking, exploring, games, art projects, science projects to both have fun and provide opportunity for learning. Remember young children learn best through play.

7. Have Fun—Read, play a game, do a project, laugh, share a joke. Make time in your routines to just enjoy the little things in your life. Find a positive to each day. Often, we can sink into a rut and struggle to get out of it.

8. Contact your local mental health provider if you are feeling overwhelmed or if your anxiety is feeling more like panic, you feel depressed, or experience other symptoms of increased mental health issues that can be eased through a conversation with a trained provider.

UCS is open and available to serve the community.

Bennington UCS
802-442-5491

www.ucsvt.org

Northshire UCS
802-362-3950

WATCH NOW

UCS receives $4k to support as risk youth

Vermont Business Magazine

The Opportunity Fund for Southshire Youth is a new fund at the Vermont Community Foundation that has awarded $43,500 in grants since its inception in 2018. The fund is now accepting applications for its 2020 grant round to support dynamic and innovative youth programs in Bennington, North Bennington, Pownal, Shaftsbury, and Woodford.
The fund was formed in 2018 in response to the community’s recognition that middle and high school youth in the Bennington area are looking for more opportunities to pursue their interests and build new skills. Growing the number of youth development programs can play a vital role in keeping families in—and attracting families to—the Southshire.

Seed funding from the Community Foundation will support $60,000 in grants. The Foundation is committed to raising at least $500,000 in the next several years to assure that the fund can continue to make at least $20,000 in annual grants in perpetuity, with an overarching goal to grow the fund to $1 million and more than double the annual grants...READ MORE.

Community Programs Lead Vermont in Positively Impacting population Health

The Vermont Care Partners FY19 Outcomes and Data Report highlights the positive impact of its designated and specialized service agency programs on population health. Vermont Care Partners’ (VCP) is a statewide network of sixteen non-profit, community-based agencies provide mental health, substance use, and intellectual and developmental disability services and supports.

Initiatives to impact population health have targeted: reducing suicide; improving social determinants of health such as housing and employment, improving access to quality services, increasing healthy behaviors to reduce the incidence of chronic disease, and improving community safety.

As noted by Simone Rueschemeyer, the Executive Director of the Vermont Care Network, one branch of Vermont Care Partners, “People supported by VCP agencies present with the most complex needs, and often require comprehensive programming. Our agencies respond with innovative and effective programs that directly impact the social determinants of health”.

With over 50% of services and supports provided where people live, work, learn, and play, VCP agencies are uniquely positioned to positively impact the health of the most vulnerable Vermonters...READ MORE.

Head Start/Early Head Start

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

Share your stories.

While most of the endless stream of news is not so great, people are doing amazing things in serving their communities around the country. Our community is no exception! April Dunham, Head Start Family Support worker volunteered her time recently at HIS Pantry. Thanks April!

Now more than ever, is a time when we could all use a
little something that feels good. Like a good story. An act that goes beyond in the service of others, caring for our neighbors, family and friends…our community. We'd love to hear about it. Share your story…any story that represents how, as a community and individuals, we bring hope and support together….Email your stories and photos to Heidi French at hfrench@ucsvt.org.

We are supporting our families with a little story time.

"A book is a gift you can open again and again."
Garrison Keilor

Our Head Start Families are using an online curriculum called Ready Rosie. Currently 101 families are utilizing the program.

Teachers and staff from our Head Start and Early Head Start programs are reading to their students. Check it out!

Jump, Frog, Jump
Sheep in a Jeep
Put Me in the Zoo

Additional Resources for COVID-19 Information

Vermont Department of Health
Center for Disease Control
Southern Vermont Medical Center
Managing Anxiety and Stress -CDC
Additional Resources

Guide to museums, e-learnings and on-line collections

As social distancing becomes the new norm, Vermonters move online for support and connection
UCS is a great place to work.

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 here. [UCS JOB OPENINGS](#)

Please be advised that the Coronavirus Virus/COVID-19 has altered the way we are currently recruiting at this time. Should you be contacted for further information, please be patient and do not reply to any unsolicited e-mails or phone calls. We are monitoring the situation and will keep our employees informed of any changes. Thank you for your understanding and support.

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**2020 Census Operational Adjustments Due to COVID-19**

The 2020 Census is underway and households across America are responding every day. In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the U.S. Census Bureau has adjusted 2020 Census operations in order to:

- Protect the health and safety of Census Bureau employees and the American public.
- Implement guidance from federal, state, and local health authorities.
- Ensure a complete and accurate count of all communities.

The table below summarizes the adjustments to operations. Should any additional adjustment become necessary, the Census Bureau will promptly publish the change in an updated document.

### STATUS OF CURRENT OPERATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity/Operation</th>
<th>Planned Schedule</th>
<th>Adjustment</th>
<th>Revised Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Response Phase</strong></td>
<td>March 12–July 31</td>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>March 12–August 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public is strongly encouraged to respond online. (Options for responding by phone or mail are also available.)</td>
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| **Update Leave**             | March 15–April 17| Delayed      | March 29–May 1   |
| Census takers will drop off invitations at the front doors of 5 million households. These households can respond online now—even without their invitation—by providing their address. |

| **Update Enumerate**         | March 16–April 30| Suspended and extended | March 16–May 14 |
| Census takers will interview about 2,000 households in remote parts of northern Maine and southeast Alaska. They're interviewing people outside their home, allowing 6 feet of space between one another. |
consideration, we are limiting job interviews to telephone or video communication, in order to align with guidance by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Hiring for certain positions may also be slowed by efforts being used to promote social distancing and other recommended strategies. We thank you for your understanding as we navigate the best way to keep you, employees, and our community safe.

All upcoming agency events and trainings through the end of April have been cancelled.