

**UNITED COUNSELING SERVICE  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2019-2024  
INTRODUCTION**

United Counseling Service is known as a great place to work and a great place to get care. What does this mean? It means we provide high quality care and hold our staff to high standards. We embrace the five elements as a certified Center of Excellence that are: World Class Customer Service, Comprehensive Care, Easy Access, Excellent Outcomes and Excellent Value while infusing the values of ICARE: Ideal Service, Culture of Caring, Accountability, Responsiveness and Empowerment into everything we do. We lead staff through a lens of Humanistic Leadership which is generally understood as a set of principles oriented to developing meaningful and purposeful experiences guided by basic values and focus on the common good. Our leadership values of PRIDE are: Purpose, Resilient, Inspire, Dignity and Ethics.

We strive to be an accountable organization, one that is an integral part of the health neighborhood, providing rapid access, high value, comprehensive and whole person care when it is needed.

The Agency faces a host of potential threats to its ability to maintain high quality standards of care and engaging a high quality and skilled workforce. These potential threats include: difficulty recruiting, hiring and retaining competent and skilled staff, the increasing demand for services for individuals with complex needs, health care reform on both a national and state level, continuous threats of rescissions or reductions in funding at the state and federal levels, and the need for increasing flexibility in conducting business to meet the ever changing landscape of behavioral healthcare.

The overall goal of the Strategic Plan is to guide our organization in day to day decision-making and provides us with opportunities to make change, respond to demands and threats and to continue to evaluate progress and changing our approach when necessary to achieve the mission of the Agency.

**The UCS Mission:**

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

The purpose of the Plan is to provide strategic guidance to Agency Leadership; to facilitate meaningful Board oversight and inquiry and to facilitate a strategic partnership between Agency leadership and the Board of Directors.

The Plan will be reviewed annually with Agency Leadership and the Board of Directors and will be amended as appropriate to align with new opportunities and challenges.

The Plan includes strategic goals to meet the standards of being a Center of Excellence by increasing access to care and recruiting, retaining and engaging a qualified and skilled workforce. By focusing with intentionality on these two strategic goals, we will meet our **strategic intention** to be known as a Great place to work and a great place to get care.

### **CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**

The National Council for Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorders (National Council) defined the framework for what it means to be a Behavioral Health Center of Excellence. A Center of Excellence offers easy access to comprehensive care for persons experiencing behavioral health issues. People experience respectful, self-directed, team based, and holistic care that addresses their needs and achieves outcomes that are important to them. Excellence is created by each staff member who has a heartfelt connection to their community and the people they serve, based on a deep understanding of trauma, best practices, a focus on their own well-being and an unshakable commitment to resiliency and recovery.

Meeting this definition is a high bar. It begins by building a great team that achieves high marks on a set of core elements which lead the community to recognize UCS as a great place to work and a great place to get care. The five core elements are:

#### **Easy Access**

##### ***“Be there for me when I need you”***

This is a basic principle for Easy Access which means provide the right care, at the right time, in the right setting, by the right provider. Same day appointments are often the goal, with efficient client processing and reduced wait time between initial contact and subsequent treatment services. We effectively manage no shows and cancellations and eliminate redundant information collection.

Easy Access is instrumental to World Class Customer Service (element 2) and leads to Excellent Outcomes (element 4).

#### **World Class Customer Service**

We provide extraordinary service for people by achieving a seamless service experience provided by caring employees who provide a personal touch and are empowered to resolve any problems that arise. A Center of Excellence strives to provide personalized, high quality care. In such centers, employees feel their work is meaningful and are invested in the health of the organization. Clients experience high quality care from their initial contact (element 1) with the agency and until the agency’s services are no longer needed.

#### **Comprehensive Care**

Centers of Excellence are known for offering a broad scope of mental health, substance use, co-occurring, developmental services, and early care and education that are integrated with medical care and other services and supports. A COE has a deep understanding of the population it serves and offers a tailored array of services.

### **Excellent Outcomes**

UCS supports clients to achieve excellent outcomes on measures that are relevant to the client. Outcome data is collected and evaluated on an individual, programmatic and system-wide level, on a regular basis and used to continuously improve care.

### **Excellent Value**

Services provided are efficient and cost effective. The services are “lean” meaning inefficiencies have been removed through continuous process improvement activities.

These five (5) core elements are at the center of everything we do. It is our foundation.

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 recovery can be best delivered through the lens of meaningful outcome measures including overall client health and wellness.

Clinical excellence is best achieved through our solid infrastructure of excellent **CUSTOMER SERVICES, HUMAN RESOURCES, COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT, FINANCE, FACILITIES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY, OPERATIONS, and INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY** Departments.

Given our continued solid infrastructure steeped in the Center of Excellence foundation, our focus areas of **Workforce** and **Access to Care** will allow us to maintain or surpass the high bar set forth by the Center of Excellence Certification.

### **FOCUS AREAS**

Charles Ingoglia, National Council President and CEO stated that the number of Americans seeking mental health and substance use services is on the rise, in large part because “people understand that treatment works, treatment is effective, and recovery is possible” Still, he said, “lack of access to timely, high quality treatment has replaced stigma as the largest barrier for those in need of mental health and addiction treatment services.” This also includes access to service for people with intellectual disabilities, on the autism spectrum, and quality early care and education.

Issues with recruiting and retaining adequate **Workforce** and a lack of timely **Access to Care** are often linked and although this is a factor, it is not exclusive to the problem. Each area requires a specific focus to better serve our community. Creating a stable, high performing, engaged workforce and providing timely, equitable and easy access to services goes hand in hand.

**STRATEGIC GOALS:**

**1. Be there for me when I need you with the right care, at the right time with the right provider, in the right place.**

- Clients are offered a face to face service on the same day of the initial contact for mental health services.
- Clients are seen for their first treatment appointment within 14 days of their clinical intake.
- Developmental Services clients report they like where they live.
- The Agency's Utilization Management process is used to ensure we can meet the needs of our community.
- Develop and achieve meaningful outcome measures.
  - Hiring appropriately credentialed staff (The right provider).
  - Expand the hours of clinical availability to meet the needs of the community (The right time).
  - Identify service gaps. Determine how to fill those gaps through strategic partnerships and flexible service provision (The right care).
  - Providing flexible services as needed in our community (The right place).
- Facilities are safe, welcoming, comfortable and efficient.
- Increase revenue through promoting our services for third-party insurers and substance use services.

**2. Technology supports the needs of the staff, clients, and agency**

- Mobility of EMR allows for community-based staff to access needed information.
- Data is readily available, understandable, accurate, and timely.
- Data is used to inform Agency/programmatic decision making.
- Staff are equipped with the necessary tools (hardware and training) to do their jobs.
  - Staff provide collaborative documentation.
- IT strategies and planning provide needed security and up-to-date IT platforms.

**3. We have adequate staffing to do the job**

- Reduce turn-over rate by 10%.
- Diversify recruitment strategies.
- Increase % of staff retained after 2 years.
- The development of a Succession Plan.
- Increase agency match of health care benefits.

**4. Staff are high performing and engaged in culture of agency**

- Create a robust on-boarding program
- Develop a new hire mentoring program
- Develop a bridge to licensure program.
- Robust use of Relias Certification Programs.
- Development and implementation of the Training Collaborative.

- Implementation and measurement of key performance indicators.
- Decrease the percentage of staff who report they experience stress at work that is beyond their ability to cope by 20%.

**5. Community knows what we do and holds us in high regard.**

- Conduct annual Community Stakeholder Surveys.
  - Develop strategies for community connections using the Community Stakeholder Survey and the Head Start Community Survey.
- Expand and diversify the audience of Community Education events.
- Expand the marketing of Agency Programs and Services.
- Staff report they are confident in acting as ambassadors of the Agency.
- Host annual Community Town Halls.
- Expand our donor base.

**MOVING FORWARD**

**UCS is 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 Leadership 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 coming 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,

Leslie Addison  
Kristi Cross  
Dawn Danner  
Jill Doyle  
Amy Fela  
Nathaniel Marcoux  
Lorna Mattern

2019 Review and Update by the UCS Executive Director, Division Directors and Members of the Board of Directors

**PROCEDURAL PROCESS**

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.

On May 15, 2019, the Board of Directors of United Counseling Service authorized the creation of the third strategic plan. The process consisted of Director meetings facilitated by Board member, Forest Weyen and continued with a Strategic Planning Committee consisting of Division Director's Leslie Addison, Dawn Danner, Jill Doyle and Amy Fela; and Board members Nathaniel Marcoux and Kristi Cross.

*Revised October 2017*

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

*Approved by the Board of Directors on December 18, 2019*