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.

Developmental Services Staff Rise to the Challenge - Thank you!
Dawn Danner, Director of Developmental Services at UCS

I have always known staff who work in Developmental Services are a special type of person. In the last few weeks since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I have seen staff rise up like never before. They have filled in places they never have worked before. They have willingly gone into the community so that others caring for clients do not have to. DS staff have brought dinner to a lonely client who has no one else and is incredibly anxious right now. They are calling people for no other reason than to check in and make sure they are okay. People are taking extra time, extra care, and extra patience with those clients who rely on us the most. Several of them have spent hours organizing virtual activities and events for our clients so that they can remain active and engaged. All have adapted to this new climate of working from home and having to learn technology on the fly. The group home staff at UCS come into work every single day knowing there is a chance that sickness may soon be a part of their daily lives.
I have seen the leaders of UCS join together to create a solid and well-planned response to this virus. This response is aimed at caring for our community’s most vulnerable people and the staff at UCS are ready to meet this difficult challenge. The care is continuing, the devoted staff are here, and they are ready to respond to the community’s needs in this scary and uncertain time. The staff in Developmental Services at UCS are answering the call in a compassionate and dedicated way and I am extremely proud and humbled to be their leader.

*Picture - Residents and staff at Gatling House plant flower boxes.*

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**Good things are happening at Autumn House!**
Allison Katrick, Group Home Manager at UCS’ Autumn House

Everyone at Autumn House continues to work hard during this difficult time. Residents have been enjoying the warmer weather, working in the garden and preparing for Easter day festivities! We can’t control the situation we are in, but we are certainly making the best of it. I’ve seen selflessness and strength. Staff continue to work hard every day to make sure the residents’ needs are always coming first. We are all in this together and will get through this together- with the help of some very special, very essential people.

*Autumn house residents planting some spring flowers and dying some easter eggs.*

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**Tips to Handling COVID Stress**
Lori Vadakin, MA, LADC, Director CRT, Outpatient and Substance Use Services at UCS

We know that major changes in our lives often create stress. Under typical circumstances, losing a spouse, moving to a new place, or getting laid off all create massive stress. Now in the time of COVID-19, we are all going through massive changes at the same time: shifting recommendations, a constant flurry of bad news, shortages of things we need, being laid off, or having to suddenly work or study from home… Coping with these stresses is not easy.

Just as you protect your physical health by washing and sanitizing your hands, wearing a mask, and social distancing, there are some important things to do for your mental health,
too. Most of the recommendations actually support both physical and mental wellbeing.

**Keep a regular sleep schedule.** Not having to be up at a particular time, due to changing work or school demands, could cause you to sleep in. So try to go to bed at the same time each night, sleep at least 8 hours, and wake up at the same time each day. You’ll improve your mood and, many studies suggest, your immune response, as well.

**Eat healthfully.** For many, stressful times call for comfort food. But many studies suggest that getting plenty of fruits and vegetables actually improves our happiness. Cooking something new, healthy, and delicious, of course, is also a great source of positive excitement.

**Make a plan for the day.** No matter how small, having a goal is a good thing. And some goals are more helpful than others. Those that include physical exercise, fresh air, and reaching out to someone you love via the phone or online chat are especially good for maintaining good mental wellbeing.

**Get help if you need it.** Anxiety, confusion, powerlessness are common feelings during a pandemic. If you or someone you love needs emotional support, UCS is available at 802.442.5491. Other supports include; text VT to 741741 to talk to someone at the Crisis Text Line. Trained helpers are available 24/7 at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. For more information visit healthvermont.gov/suicide.
For Youth and Families
Family Emergency Services

- Do you need help managing your child's behavior?
- Do you need parenting support?
- Is your child anxious, depressed or suicidal?
- Do you need mental health help or behavioral support?

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions or are in crisis - Family Emergency Services (FES) at United Counseling Service is available to any family or youth in crisis who reside in Bennington County.

Services can include de-escalation, parenting support, suicide or homicide screening, and other mental health and behavioral supports as appropriate.

In being mindful of social distancing, we are using telehealth to communicate with families.

Overnight crisis services available for families, with Family Emergency Services following up the next day.

**All crisis services can be accessed by calling**
802.442.1700

Please be prepared to provide basic information so staff can return your call.

**Support United Counseling Service**

In this time of uncertainty due to COVID-19, supporting local non-profits has never been more important. As you make essential trips to the grocery store, you can purchase a $2.50 reusable Community Bag at the Bennington Hannaford this month to support UCS with a $1 donation. UCS is a great place to work and a great place to get care!
This week Early Head Start and Head Start teachers will be starting closed Facebook groups for their classrooms. This will allow teachers, families and children to connect with their classrooms. Teachers will present Questions of the Day, Story Time, Music and Movement activities, and more. Families can interact with posts and post pictures and videos of the children and what they are doing. Children will have the opportunity to send messages to their teachers and classmates.

We piloted the closed Facebook page last week with one classroom and families were very excited to be able to interact with the classroom teachers and each other so we decided to move forward with the rest of the program. It adds another form of communication to what we are already doing with the Ready Rosie videos and the Remind App.

Families are enjoying the Ready Rosie videos and app and some comments include:

"Yay! Helps me figure out more educational activities we can do throughout our week!"

"Went good he laughed while doing the Crazy Counting activity."

"I'm very excited to use Ready Rosie!"

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."  
Emilie Buchwald
We are supporting our families with a little story time.

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

- The Invisible String
- Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus
- The Pigeons Find a Hot Dog

Read the Head Start / ECS April 2020 Newsletter

BENNINGTON COUNTY FOOD RESOURCES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 * 4/10

*Unless otherwise noted, food pickup is outside maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet

Southwest VT Supervisory Union - breakfast and lunch available for all students under 18 via school bus delivery or in person at MAUMS. Visit “Meals for Students” at www.svsu.org under the Covid response tab for routes and delivery times.

BENNINGTON:

Kitchen Cupboard (GBICS) - 121 Depot Street; 802-447-3700
Every Tuesday  5:30-7:30 PM
Every Thursday & Saturday  10:00 AM-12:00 PM

VeggieVanGo (VT Foodbank) – Drive-through; follow parking attendant.
April 15 & May 20  8:30-10 Mount Anthony High School
April 22 & May 27  12:30-2 Mount Anthony High School
May 6  8:30-10 Pownal Elementary School

HIS Pantry (Sacred Heart Saint Francis de Sales) - 238 Main Street; 802-442-3141
Every Wednesday  1:00 PM-3:30 PM
Every Friday  10:00 AM-11:30 AM

Shires Housing/SASH
First Wednesday  11:30 AM  Brookside Apartments
Second Wednesday  12-2 & 5-7 PM  Applegate Apartments
Third Wednesday  11:30 AM  Walloomsac Apartments

Effective 4/11: Grace Christian School, 104 Kocher Drive; 603-504-4955 - To-Go or delivery. Cold lunch and/or hot supper and grocery delivery. Call by 10:00 AM for lunch; 4:00 PM for supper. Serving Bennington County and NY (Hoosick Falls, White Creek, Cambridge)

Green Mountain Christian Center – 440 Main Street (back parking lot); 447-7224
First Friday & Third Friday  4:00-6:00 PM

Bible Baptist Church, Harwood Hill; 802-447-3618. Call for an appointment

Hot Meals To-Go or Delivered:
Second Congregational Church, Hillside Street - Sunday 5:00 PM - To-Go
Meals on Wheels (café closed). Call 802-442-8012 for eligibility - Delivered
Harvest House Soup Kitchen, River Street - To-Go
Mon-Fri 8:00-10:00AM and 11:15AM-1:00PM, Sat 8:00-9:30AM, Sun 8:00-10:00AM

Southwestern VT Council on Aging Grocery delivery - for those 60+ or younger with disabilities. Call for information; 802-786-5990

NORTH BENNINGTON:
St. John the Baptist Church, Houghton Street (N. Bennington & Shaftsbury residents)
Second Friday 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Tuesday after second Friday 3:00 PM-4:00 PM

North Bennington Baptist Church –Church Street; 802-442-7251
Every Thursday 1:00-2:00 PM (Call if needed outside these hours)

SHAFTSBURY:
The Carpenter's Shop (Shaftsbury United Methodist), 127 Church St.; 802-442-5893

ARLINGTON:
Arlington and Sunderland Meal Delivery for Students – Contact Kathy Clark, Federated Church of East Arlington and Summer Meal Programs, ksclark58@yahoo.com
Arlington Food Shelf, 165 Old Mill Rd; 802-375-6328 (Arlington, Sunderland, Sandgate)
First Tuesday 1:30-4:00 PM
Third Tuesday 3:30-5:00 PM

Second Chance Animal Shelter – cat food, litter & dog food. Call for info; 802-375-2898

MANCHESTER:
Burr & Burton Academy Meal Delivery for Students - Contact Sarah McMillionsmcmillan@burrburton.org or Billy Canfield bcanfield@burrburton.org
Manchester Community Food Cupboard, 6039 Main Street; 802-362-0057
Every Wednesday 2:00-4:00 PM
Every Thursday 10:00-2:00 AND 2:00-4:00 PM
Last Saturday 10:00 AM-12:00 PM

Shires Housing/SASH
Second Wednesday 10:30 AM - Meadows Apartments (behind Shaws); Seniors only

Additional resources:
www.brcvlt.org www.hungerfreevt.org www.vtfoodbank.org
https://sites.google.com/view/benningtonfoodconnections/home Dial 211

* Updated regularly ~ contact andrea.malinowski@svhealthcare.org / 802.379.5468 with additions, questions and/or edits

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

Be Counted.
Census data is used to extend billions of dollars in funding for hospitals, school lunch programs, Medicaid and resources that are needed every year, especially in uncertain times like now. Make sure everyone in your home is counted.

Complete the 2020 Census now.

Please consider supporting UCS.

Now more than ever 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.

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

DONATE NOW

Artwork created by UCS Community Support Client.

Share your stories.

Now 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.

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 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.