We are all in this together. We 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.

UCS opioid treatment and response help individuals and families

United Counseling Service (UCS) offers individual, family and group substance-use treatment, working collaboratively with numerous community partners to inform, educate and treat anyone in Bennington County who may be affected by substance abuse. As a member of the Bennington Opioid Response Team (a cross-sector public health and safety partnership that also includes Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, the Bennington Police and Fire Departments and Rescue Squad, Turning Point Recovery Center, and SaVida Health), and funded by a community action grant, we do outreach to reduce opioid and other substance use disorders and overdoses. The Response Team's goals are to improve the lives of those afflicted by supporting them and their families directly, while at the same time working to educate the broader community and reduce the stigma associated with addiction and substance use.

“I am proud to work with an amazing group of community partners to try and reach high risk populations,” says Lori Vadakin, UCS Director of Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Services. “By working with our partners, we have a better chance of reaching those who need us the most, which are not only those who need treatment, but family members who are also affected.”...Read More.

Photo: Christine Ouellette, UCS Community Substance Use Outreach Manager, holding up an opioid emergency kit

Vermont's recipe for fighting "caution fatigue"

Up until recently, isolated states with small populations—like Vermont, Hawaii, and Alaska—had been spared the worst of the coronavirus pandemic. As we enter into the seventh month of the pandemic, even some of those recording low numbers of cases in the past are beginning to experience large increases. On August 31, for instance, Hawaii had 133 new cases, and Alaska had 37. Meanwhile, Vermont’s cases have remained very low, just 8 on
August 31. How is this possible?

In July, Bill McKibben published a column in the New Yorker, in which he took a guess at Vermont's long-standing success in managing the coronavirus. He noted that we are a healthy state to start with and benefit from strong statewide leadership. More than that, though, he noted, that we may benefit from how well we know and trust our neighbors. While these were intuitive remarks by McKibben, when we break them down, we see what seems like a well-constructed plan to avoid caution fatigue.

Caution fatigue arises when we are no longer vigilant about taking precautions, whether it is because we are tired of them, or we think they may no longer be needed, because no one around us has had COVID-19. Sometimes it feels like we are being bombarded by decisions we didn't have to make in the past: whether to accept a playdate, to speak up about a potentially risky work situation, or convincing children to wear a mask. As time goes on, it is harder to choose well. Our perception of the risk is skewed. We begin to make decisions based on our old habits, which are easier, rather than based on recommendations to keep us safe. In other states, caution fatigue may be hitting an all-time high. Vermont's unique characteristics may help mitigate it...

Rachel Darby, PMHNP-BC, is a nurse practitioner at United Counseling Service in Bennington.

**WCAX video series on suicide awareness and prevention**

To help create awareness and offer insights on how to recognize the signs and symptoms and help prevent suicide, WCAX broadcasted a week-long series featuring the Vermont care Partners statewide network of sixteen community-based agencies that provide mental health, substance use, and intellectual and developmental disability services and supports.

- Watch "Help for Vermonters struggling with self-harm"
- Watch "How to recognize someone may be thinking of self harm or suicidé"
- Watch "Breaking the stigma surrounding suicide"
- Watch "Forging connections to prevent suicide"
- Watch "How to make sure children don't struggle in silence"

**We are here for you.**

To receive a free copy of our suicide prevention resource guide, call (802) 442-5491

Or visit ucsvt.org to learn more about all of our services and supports.

**Stephanie Mulligan joins UCS board**

This summer, United Counseling Service (UCS) welcomed Stephanie Mulligan to its board of directors. The UCS board oversees the operations of Bennington County’s community mental and behavioral health and developmental services organization.
“We are pleased to have Stephanie join our board,” said Lorna Mattern, Executive Director of UCS. “She is knowledgeable and has a deep commitment to the community.”

Mulligan graduated from the University of Vermont with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting. Following graduation, she worked for a private CPA firm in Latham, New York specializing in personal and small business taxes, then returned to Vermont and Crossroads Accounting in Bennington. In 2013 she became the Business Manager of the Career Development Center (also in Bennington), overseeing budget development and Human Resources. In 2019 Mulligan was appointed Finance Director at MSK and Goldstone Architects.

“UCS is very important to the health and welfare of this community,” said Mulligan. “I look forward to helping UCS as a board member as it moves forward during these challenging times.”

Stephanie Mulligan has served on the boards of the Bennington Early Childhood Center and Southwest Vermont Union Elementary School District, where she currently serves as Treasurer. She lives in Shaftsbury with her husband and two children, and enjoys hiking and spending time with her family.

COVID-19 disproportionately impacts those with developmental disabilities

The life-altering effects of COVID-19 have been tougher on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities than just about anyone else, and they need more support, a group of experts is warning.

A letter published recently in the American Journal of Psychiatry on behalf of the directors of the nation’s 13 intellectual and developmental disabilities research centers — which are funded by the National Institutes of Health — is sounding the alarm about the devastating impact the pandemic has had on an already vulnerable population.

Many people with developmental disabilities have lost access to caregivers and service providers and these supports may not return given the financial toll of the pandemic on agencies and state budgets, the experts say...Read more.

Pictured: Janie Desmond who has visual impairment and mild intellectual disability comes to the edge of her porch for a portrait in Durham, N.C. Desmond is one of many adults with disabilities who rely on support staff in their home to remain independent, but are worried that close interaction could increase the risk of contracting COVID-19. (Casey Toth/The News & Observer/TNS)
Registration is still open for the United Counseling Service (UCS) Virtual Superhero 5K and Kids’ Dash. The reimagined event, originally scheduled to take place on Saturday, November 7, will now be able to be completed any time over the weekend. Participants are encouraged to submit a photo of their treadmill or screenshot from their tracking device that shows their distance and pace, as well as a photo of themselves at a “finish line” in their superhero costume. **There will also be a Virtual Kids’ Dash for kids to participate in.** “What does a Virtual Kids’ Dash look like? Run as fast as you can in your favorite superhero costume and send us a photo! A prize will be awarded for best kid costume,” says Heidi French, Director of Community Relations.

You can still join super coach Andrea Malinowski for a FREE 5K Training plan. The remote program will be delivered via Facebook Live and will include weekly updates with training and wellness tips, **all included as part of the registration fee.**

Registration is $35 for adults, $20 for students and UCS staff, $10 for UCS clients—and FREE for the first 100 UCS clients and for all kids under 12. Race packets will be mailed to participants with official race bibs and a UCS Superhero buff (multi-use headband/face covering). Children under the age of 12 who register will receive a virtual toolkit with a training log. Visit [ucsvt.org](http://ucsvt.org) to register for the event.

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**Head Start/Early Head Start**

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

**Celebration of our summer program**

Our Head Start and Early Head Start celebrated the end of summer with a drive through parade. Teachers made signs and cheered for students and parents as they drove through their child’s center. This summer 109 students were enrolled in the program. We look forward to another year with our families and want to give a special congratulations to all the students that graduated from Preschool and are moving on to Kindergarten.
In this time of the unprecedented challenges we face, both globally and in our local communities, I am reminded daily of my gratitude for UCS and its “Culture of Caring”. Employees who work at UCS know that we are built on certain values that are key to successful interactions. We call it the “I CARE” model. Under this values-based approach, we are asked every day to strive for Ideal Service, to contribute toward our Culture of Caring with Accountability, Responsiveness and Empowerment. In leading by example, we support each other, we build up and we show we care.
According to Ann Rhoades, public speaker and founding executive of JetBlue Airways, pathways to greatness are built on a company's values where winning environments allow their employees to thrive. Anthony Tjan, entrepreneur and author of the book Good People, stresses that in business, people matter more than anything else—that "when good people imprint good values onto others, and they in turn do the same, they create enduring value and forward progress." Favorable actions occur when good people behave with gratitude, compassion and truth.

At UCS, we are deliberate in our efforts to create this very environment. By acknowledging that caring matters, we make a difference in each other's lives one day at a time; sometimes, one moment at a time. It's quite simple, really. We can never underestimate the difference that goodness makes. Especially now more than ever, kindness matters! Be the light that brightens someone's day. "I CARE". Pass it on.

*Leslie Addison is Director of Human Resources*

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**Join our team!**

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.

We are currently seeking qualified candidates to fill the following positions:

- **Emergency Clinician**
- **Family Outreach Clinician**
- **Staffed Living Program Manager**
- **Classroom Assistant / Bus Driver**
- **Medical Office Mental Health Clinician (Part Time)**

Check out all current openings at [UCS JOB OPENINGS](#)

Please be advised that the Coronavirus/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.

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**BENNINGTON COUNTY FOOD RESOURCES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**
The Bennington Banner has lifted the paywall on all coronavirus stories that provide critical public health information to readers.

As a part of the federal Coronavirus Relief Bill, many 3SquaresVT households have seen some changes to and expansion of benefits. To learn more & find out if you qualify for 3SquaresVT visit Hunger Free Vermont.

Additional Resources for COVID-19 Information

COVID Support VT
Vermont Department of Health
Centers for Disease Control
Southern Vermont Medical Center
Managing Anxiety and Stress—CDC
Map of Community Resources in Bennington
Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC)
COVID 19 Resource Page

Articles of Interest

Money available through state program to pay overdue utility bills -Green Mountain Power Corp has opened up a Limited Time to Apply for State Funding Assistance, $8 Million Available...Read more.

Learn About the Cultural Dimensions of Mental Health
National Mental Health Alliance (NAMI) explains how our identity and culture affect how we perceive and experience mental health conditions. Check out their Cultural Dimensions Web Section.

Please Consider Supporting UCS

Support from our donors is vital to ensure that UCS can 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

You can also make a secure online donation using a credit card:

DONATE NOW
We respect **WOMEN**, **MEN** and **NON-BINARY** people • We value **BLACK LIVES** • We stand with our **LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY MEMBERS** • We celebrate **CHILDREN** • We stand with **IMMIGRANTS, REFUGEES**, with **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**, and **PEOPLES OF ALL FAITHS** • We support **INDIVIDUALS** and **FAMILIES** challenged by mental health, substance use and developmental disabilities.

We stand with our **COMMUNITY**.

**HATE HAS NO BUSINESS HERE. All are Welcome Here.**