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.

With sincere thanks...

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to our staff who have worked tirelessly to keep the people we serve safe and moving forward with their lives over the past nine months. Your commitment to those we serve and to our mission has only deepened throughout the pandemic, and your efforts have truly been extraordinary.

Thank you to those who have provided courageous, selfless, and quality care 24 hours a day for weeks and months on end during the pandemic, some without a break. You are appreciated more than we can say for your dedication and commitment.

Thank you to our direct support professionals who have created new ways to teach skills and promote active engagement in new online activities and supported the people we serve.

Thank you to staff for stepping in and providing care directly whenever and wherever it was needed. Thank you to our clinicians and case managers who were there for those who needed mental health and substance use support. Thank you for creatively finding ways to serve the increasing needs in our community.

Thank you to our emergency services staff who continue to respond to mental health crisis in the community, wherever and whenever needed.

To our staff who tirelessly kept track of new directives and safety measures to ensure that everyone in the agency has the necessary tools to do their jobs, thank you.

Thank you to the people we serve for your patience, understanding and cooperation to keep us all safe during this time.

We are extraordinarily grateful to all of the essential workers in the UCS Community. Your sincere caring
for the people we serve, your commitment to our mission, and your support of one another is a model for how high-quality services are provided. As we look forward to a new and better year, we know that together, we build a stronger community.

Sincerely
Lorna Mattern, Executive Director and the UCS Board of Directors

UCS provides mental health, substance use and developmental services to region as pandemic puts spotlight on emotional challenges

Human beings are social creatures. We evolved to work together, to pull from each other’s strengths and cover each other’s weaknesses. Cooperation is what took us from living in caves to building cities, and what carried us through the darkest days of our collective history.

Community is the common thread running through all United Counseling Services’ programs. UCS’s comprehensive services build on our existing social ties — family, friends, school, the workplace — to provide a web of developmental, substance use and mental health supports across Bennington County.

United Counseling Service began serving the Bennington community in 1958, with a staff of six and an annual budget of just $13,000. As the state of Vermont moved towards deinstitutionalization — the process of moving patients with developmental and mental health needs out of state-run facilities and back into their home communities — UCS expanded to provide locally the services that previously had been available only through hospitals and residential programs outside the Bennington area.

While UCS receives a substantial portion of its funding from state and federal grants, it is ultimately a private organization, allowing it to operate more efficiently and with greater flexibility than a government agency. This is especially important in the fields of psychological and developmental services, in which treatment methods are constantly evolving, and community needs can change rapidly. When a new challenge arises — say, a global health crisis — UCS can adapt with expanded programming and new, safe ways to reach clients...Read more.

Pictured: DS Clients visit Hogback mountain in the fall.

Pictured: (L) Rich Jorgensen prepares breakfast in one of UCS’ group homes (R) Students returned in person Head Start and Early Head Start.
We are proud to introduce our new community education series, UCS Presents: Wellness Moments, which will address relevant topics around mental health. This edition focuses on Coping with the Holiday Blues. Listen as Lorna Mattern, Executive Director of UCS and Katie Aiken, Outpatient Clinician discuss the holiday blues, symptoms to look out for, self-care and when to seek help.

Watch "Coping with the Holiday Blues"

UCS Annual Report

We are pleased to share our 2019-20 UCS annual report with you. If you would like a hard copy, please email skenyon@ucsvt.org.

View UCS Annual Report

A Special Presentation of "Ernie & Joe: Crisis Cops", followed by a Q&A Panel

Join us for a special evening online as we share a 25-minute excerpt screening of this award-winning HBO documentary, followed by a panel discussion and Q&A.

Ernie & Joe: Crisis Cops Documentary
January 21, 2021
6–7:30 pm

The documentary is an intimate portrait of two officers from the San Antonio Police Department's 20-person Mental Health Unit who are helping to change the way police respond to mental health calls. A panel discussion with a Vermont police officer, a Mobile Crisis Clinician and a person with lived experience in the Bennington community will follow the screening. Access to the full-length documentary will be available after the event.

This special FREE event is hosted by NAMI Vermont and Team Two Vermont.

Register Now
Manchester Center Knights Donate Thanksgiving Baskets to Northshire UCS

The Thanksgiving Holiday was much brighter for 25 Northshire families this year thanks to the generosity of the Manchester Center Knights of Columbus. The Knights donated and delivered Turkeys and Thanksgiving Baskets to the United Counseling Services Northshire office to help families who find themselves in difficult financial situations during the holiday season.

The Manchester Center Knights of Columbus have donated the baskets for many years. Their impact is far-reaching and touches the lives of many families in the community.

Support Mentoring at UCS

Support Mentoring at UCS by purchasing raffle tickets for our gift baskets! All proceeds will directly support Mentoring at UCS. Our youth need mentoring even more than they did before and COVID made it impossible for us to hold our main fundraising event—the UCS Bowlathon—this past year. This program helps children and youth form community connections. Please help us by participating in our basket raffle! Tickets are 1 for $5 or 4 for $20.

Each week a different themed gift package will be highlighted with live Facebook winner drawings at noon on Tuesdays. These are not just your average packages so please take the time and peruse! To purchase tickets visit Mentoring at UCS Basket Raffle.

VCS Making the Holidays a Little Brighter

Special thanks to the Vermont Country Store. The staff generously donated gifts and made the holidays a little brighter for fourteen UCS families. The company also matched employees’ donations dollar for dollar in Price Chopper Gift Cards.
Join us for Community Pulse Meeting

Please join us for this open meeting about programming and construction updates for the Bennington Recreation Center/ Senior Center/Early Childhood Center addition. All community members are encouraged to attend.

January 27th at 5:30pm

Join Zoom Meeting
https://ucsvt.zoom.us/j/96766467418?pwd=SUZwSGs2aHdEV01uLamc2NzhnVUttdz09

Meeting ID: 967 6646 7418
Passcode: 016605
One tap mobile
+16465588656,.96766467418# US (New York)
+13017158592,.96766467418# US (Washington D.C)

Dial by your location
  +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)
  +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington D.C)
  +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
  +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)
  +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
  +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 967 6646 7418
Find your local number: https://ucsvt.zoom.us/u/ayoQuqiQe
Please Consider Supporting UCS

We have a deep commitment to building a stronger community. Despite the challenges of 2020, our staff were driven by a common purpose to do the right thing for our clients, our community, and each other. This year, crisis calls have increased by 70% and requests for our services have increased by 135%. The need for our services keeps growing. Please make a donation today.

We are here for you, will you be here for us?

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

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.

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.

Articles of Interest

WCAX: As virus numbers rise, Vermonters urged to take care of mental health.

According to Mental Health America (MHA), Vermont ranks #1 overall in having a lower prevalence of mental illness and higher rates of access to care nationwide. For all the national data, visit: MHA National Data.

Opinion | The Hidden ‘Fourth Wave’ of the Pandemic - The New York Times

COVID-19 has many of us feeling isolated, but you can always take care of your mental health with self-care. Having a solid self-care routine can alleviate feelings of stress and bring you to a more positive place when things feel overwhelming. The National Council for Mental Health provides Tips from the Mental Health First Aid curriculum on how to develop a self-care routine so you can #BeTheDifference for yourself during these uncertain times.

Additional Resources for COVID-19 Information

COVID Support VT
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.