

# Programs and Services

UCS supports thousands of individuals and a host of local organizations.

## Outpatient Mental Health

- Child, adult, family, and couples counseling
- Psychotherapy groups
- Mental health and developmental disabilities
- Evaluation and psychological testing
- Equine Assisted Therapy
- Community education and consultation service

1478  
Individuals served

## Business Programs

- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Management consultation
- Community partnerships
- Trainings/Webinars

6  
Organizations use UCS for EAP

## Children, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS)

- Family Emergency Services (FES)
- Family outreach services
- Individual and group therapy
- Therapeutic case management
- Respite services
- School-based services
- Jump on Board for Success (JOBS) program
- Transitional living programs
- Teens for Change Youth Group
- Camp Be A Kid
- Psychiatric Urgent Care for Kids (PUCK)

660  
Youth and families served

## Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT)

- Residential program
- Community support services
- Supported employment program
- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Programs for those with dual diagnoses

138  
Individuals served

## Developmental Services

- Residential services including group homes and shared living
- Community support services
- College Steps Program
- Case Management services
- Family support services
- Employment services
- Crisis services

206  
Clients served

## Early Childhood Services (ECS)

- Bennington County Head Start
- Bennington County Early Head Start
- Parenting and family education
- Family outreach

180  
Families served

## Emergency Services

- 24-hour emergency service
- Battelle House crisis stabilization center
- Mobile crisis services

2144  
Services provided

## Psychiatric Services

- Psychiatric evaluation
- Medication management
- Liaison to intensive hospital care
- Liaison to area colleges

2973  
Services provided

## Substance Use Programs

- Alcohol and drug abuse counseling and education
- Substance abuse receiving center
- Assessment for and facilitation of detox or residential services
- Intensive Outpatient Program
- Consultation to agencies and schools
- Community outreach

114  
Individuals served

## COVID Case Management: Connecting to resources

COVID Case Manager Amy Stewart joined our team this year after UCS was awarded funding for a position to address impacts related to the pandemic. Amy works with those whose lives have been significantly disrupted by the pandemic, whether or not they are clients of UCS.



COVID Case Manager Amy Stewart meets with a client in her new office at UCS.

Amy has developed relationships with numerous community partners, connecting help-seekers to resources while also providing UCS staff with a referral databank. She also formed a COVID-19 virtual group to discuss issues surrounding pandemic anxiety, open to anyone in the community, which ran for eight weeks and covered such topics as media detox, reconnecting with family and friends, and self-care.

Many people Amy meets with are struggling to find adequate housing. Since March 2020, Vermont has had a significant migration of out-of-staters, some second-homeowners and others simply seeking a healthier environment. So many have permanently settled here that housing and economic organizations have been overwhelmed as less prosperous Vermonters struggle to find housing that is now both scarce and increasingly out of financial reach.

"It truly takes a village of caring individuals to make a positive impact on the lives of people still struggling through an ongoing pandemic," says Amy. "Whether collaborating with outside agencies, medical professionals, or UCS colleagues, I have faith that we can all rise above these challenges by working together to continue making a positive impact in our community."

## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

UCS embraces the National Culturally and Linguistic Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards to advance health equity, improve quality, eliminate health disparities, and promote an informed, culturally aware, and welcoming workplace.

The UCS Equity and Inclusion Committee is open to all employees and meets monthly to promote engagement and participation. Some initiatives this year have included:

- Equity and inclusion trainings for all staff
- Specialized training on LGBTQIA issues
- Contracting with interpreter services
- Inclusive and educational messaging efforts through newsletters and social media
- Creation of an ADA-compliant website
- Participation in community events

"The E&I Committee is all about proving to staff and the community—through meaningful action—that UCS is a place where all are truly welcome. Recently, an employee transitioned genders and it took less than a day for them to receive a new business card, email address, and resources to support their identity. We will always have improvements to make, but I'm proud to be part of such a caring team."

—David Malinowski, Communications Specialist, Member of E&I Committee



David Malinowski staffing the UCS table at Bennington's Pride Fest

## Staff Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) AR

In 2018, UCS embarked on the Staff Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) to build a healthier workforce, through a grant from Building Healthy Communities. Each year since, our staff have completed the CDC Worksites Health Scorecard, an in-depth assessment that addresses topics such as nutrition, physical activity, stress management, organizational supports and more.

"By obtaining a holistic view of the agency, we have been able to implement several key initiatives and promote wellness," says Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Director of Early Childhood Services and member of the SHIP Team. "We know that initiatives are most successful when they are leadership-supported, championed, and developed with feedback from the people who know their staff and facilities best."

Since embarking on SHIP, UCS has implemented a Paid Parental Leave Policy and a Nursing Mothers Policy, on-site blood pressure monitoring in all facilities, staff health screenings and open medical office hours, and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) training for supervisors.

## Employee Assistance Programs

UCS offers Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) to organizations throughout Bennington County. Through the EAPs, we provide confidential assessments, short term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services to companies' employees and their immediate family members who have personal and/or work-related problems. UCS works with each business and organization to determine training and workshops that may be beneficial to better support their employees.

Elizabeth Buckley, PHR Manager, Human Resources at The Bank of Bennington, comments, "Our EAP services with UCS provide peace of mind for our employees who are currently going through tough times. Employees know that if they ever need services, they would have support within the community. UCS is passionate about helping our employees and their families during challenging times."



**United Counseling Service Main Office:**  
100 Ledge Hill Drive, Bennington, VT 05201 | 802-442-5491  
**United Counseling Service Northshire Office:**  
5312 Main Street, Manchester Center, VT 05255 | 802-362-3950

For a full listing of UCS program locations and residential facilities, visit [ucsvt.org](http://ucsvt.org).

United Counseling Service provides outpatient counseling and addiction services, emergency mental health services, extensive rehabilitation services, home and school-based services, employment services for people recovering from mental illness or with developmental disabilities, and Early Childhood Services. We are here for you! For more information about UCS visit [www.ucsvt.org](http://www.ucsvt.org) or call 802.442.5491.



## The Power of Collaboration



## Welcome to our 2021-22 Annual Report Highlights

Our 2021-22 Annual Report has its own section on our website and a dedicated YouTube playlist. You can find videos and expanded information on many of the articles in this report. Just look for the YT and AR symbols and use these QR codes for quick access.

YouTube  
YT



Annual Report  
AR



Dear Friends,

It takes partnerships to build a stronger community and this past year has demonstrated that working together, we make great things happen. While we experienced staff shortages, COVID outbreaks and increased demand, we were able to provide quality services to those who needed us. We worked to set up new processes to help people *when* they need it, set up partnerships to help people *where* they need it, and created innovative programming that allowed us to change *how* we deliver services.

I am so proud of the UCS team and what we accomplished together despite the challenges. We look forward to continuing our work with individuals, families, and community partners throughout Bennington County. I hope you will join us next year at our many events as we celebrate 65 years of service.

—Lorna Mattern, Executive Director



Thank you to the community!

Collaboration between UCS staff and its many community partners plays a pivotal role in allowing us to better serve the complex and increasing needs of our community. This year, working with partners in healthcare, law enforcement, and other area organizations, UCS leadership and staff worked incredibly hard to develop new and innovative ways to serve the residents of Bennington County. We are so proud of our staff and the relationships they build to bridge gaps and build a stronger community.

—Robert W. Thompson, President of the Board of Directors

## Finding Access to Services and Treatment (FAST)

### Innovative Access to Care AR

This year, UCS created a process for individuals to get care when they need it, without having to make an appointment. With UCS' Finding Access to Services and Treatment (FAST) system, people can call or walk in and be seen by a team of professionals who are there to listen. Using methods based on Collaborative Network Approach (CNA), these interviewer-led sessions include reflection and discussion, and are intended to bring useful observations to the participants.

"FAST uses a team approach," says Lori Vadakin, Director of Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Services. "We create a culture of psychological safety to determine the best approach to support an individual."

One client who went through the FAST process reported "...After I shared my story...and the more we continued this process, I began to realize the value of external resources."

FAST is designed to help assess, triage, and respond efficiently and effectively to those who call or walk in. Through this method, individuals and families feel heard, respected, and validated. People are seen immediately, with the intention that they leave with what they need—whether it be a referral, an appointment for services, or a solution to their issue.



The UCS FAST team works in groups to listen, reflect, and help clients problem-solve, using methods based on Collaborative Network Approach.



# 2021–2022 Highlights: A year of adaptation and ongoing partnerships with local businesses and organizations to strengthen the communities we serve.

## Working with partners to help with crisis: UCS and the Bennington Opioid Response Team

Alex Figueroa, Assistant Director of Substance Use Services for UCS, plays a pivotal role as co-chair of the Bennington Opioid Response Team. This countywide partnership of over 40 members works to provide an integrated approach to bridge knowledge and service gaps to improve community-wide overdose prevention efforts. Their work is especially critical at a time when Vermont has seen a 70% increase in opioid deaths from 2019 to 2021.

The team was awarded one of four Community Action Grants through the State of Vermont after Bennington County was identified as a county with high need—Bennington County has the second highest opioid death rate per capita in the state.\*

A key initiative for the group has been the Outreach for Overdose Project, a partnership of the Bennington Police Department, Bennington Rescue Squad, Bennington Turning Point Recovery Center, the Bennington Opioid Response Team, and Bennington-area spoke services (part of Vermont's statewide hub-and-spoke response to opioid treatment and intervention), with Southwestern Vermont Medical Center and United Counseling Service playing integral parts. The purpose of the project is to reduce substance use and overdoses, both fatal and non-fatal. Distributing Harm Reduction Bags, which include drug testing strips, Narcan and information about community resources that help people struggling with drugs, is part of the initiative.

"The work we do does not fall on one individual organization or one person, but a community at large," says Alex. "I am so proud and grateful for everyone that has played a role in this important work. I look forward to our upcoming projects, including creating a Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program, and adding positions that will increase care coordination for individuals with a substance use disorder."

\*Source: <https://vtdigger.org/2022/08/04/61-vermonters-died-of-opioid-overdose-in-the-first-four-months-of-2022/>



Taija LaFountain, Substance Use Disorder Case Manager and Alex Figueroa, Assistant Director of Substance Use Services, with Harm Reduction Bags.

215  
Overdose  
deaths in VT  
in 2021\*

UCS  
distributed  
819  
Harm  
Reduction  
Bags



## Vermont Care Partners Education Improvement Fund

The Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriation Act provided \$1.5 million to support strategic investments to increase the number of high-quality mental health and substance use disorder treatment professionals providing services in designated and specialized service agencies (DA/SSA). The Vermont Department of Health Office of Rural Health/Primary Care Office awarded this grant to Vermont Care Partners (VCP) to administer in collaboration with its network of 16 member agencies, providing statewide leadership for an integrated system of comprehensive services and supports.

After a stringent application process, UCS distributed \$33,000 in Education Investment Program (EIP) funds to 11 staff members. Recipient Lori Vadakin, UCS Director of Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Services, responded, "I want to extend my deepest gratitude for the EIP reimbursement. I have been paying student loan debt since my early twenties when I graduated with my undergrad degree. I feel blessed working in a profession that I love...Thank you for helping me pay off my student loan debt!"



## Youth Summit: Exploring tough topics with pros and peers

After a year's hiatus due to the pandemic, UCS was delighted to once again host the Southern Vermont Youth Summit at Grace Christian School. Bennington County teens participated in workshops, visited with peers, and engaged in meaningful conversations.

Keynote speaker Dawn Campbell, Assistant Director of Student Services with the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, discussed equity and inclusion. She helped students find a sense of pride in themselves and learn to appreciate their differences. Workshops throughout the day included suicide prevention, substance use awareness, career skills, living healthy lifestyles, and more.

"This event gave young people a chance to share their thoughts and ideas about their generation's problems," says Rebecca Shuler, Intensive Service Manager in UCS' Children, Youth and Family Service Division. "There were some fun workshops and some informative ones, allowing participants to have conversations about difficult topics like substance use and suicide prevention."



Youth Summit participants in a drawing workshop, one of many of the day's offerings

## Bridging the gap: Pairing mental health professionals with law enforcement



Bill Elwell, a UCS Mental Health Crisis Specialist, and VSP Sergeant Todd Wilkins outside the Shaftsbury field office.

This year, UCS partnered with the Vermont State Police (VSP) and embedded a clinician in the Shaftsbury barracks. The benefits of having a mental health clinician embedded with law enforcement include reducing use of force; building and strengthening partnerships with other local and state agencies; reducing stress and trauma; and being able to provide alternative options and resources on the scene.

Thanks to this partnership, UCS' Bill Elwell, a Mental Health Crisis Specialist, now provides officers with on-the-spot mental health care resources, intervention, and helps individuals in the midst of mental health crises by providing expert access in the moment.

There is no typical day for Bill. He frequently finds himself alongside officers responding to calls with behavioral or mental components. De-

escalating unexpected situations or helping people discover ways to change circumstances that have not yet been identified are all in a day's work. Bill finds ways of providing resources to people which can result in their realizing that a critical incident, or the decision leading up to it, need not define their lives. "It has become a chance for some to look at other opportunities for healing, growth and enjoying life," says Bill.

In addition to his work with the public, Bill is an instructor for the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation and a chaplain for the VSP peer support team.

VSP Sergeant Todd Wilkins has made it clear that having a mental health clinician working within the barracks has been invaluable. "It is a pleasure to have Bill work alongside us. His presence has de-escalated many situations," he says. "Having a clinician embedded in the barracks has helped to bridge the gap between law enforcement and mental health so we can better serve our community."

"I enjoy the opportunity to partner with state troopers each day, meeting people where they are at and supporting them in discovering choices, possibilities—and sometimes even hope—on the worst days of their lives," says Bill.

9/10

VSP barracks have a mental health professional embedded.<sup>2</sup> Police-mental health collaboration (PMHC) programs allow officers to be safer, reduce repeat calls for service, minimize the strain on agency resources, and connect people with mental illnesses to services.<sup>2</sup>  
Sources: 1. [bit.ly/usnews-vsp-032022](https://bit.ly/usnews-vsp-032022) 2. [bj.a.ojp.gov/program/pmhc/learning](https://bj.a.ojp.gov/program/pmhc/learning)

## Leadership and Financial Highlights

### Board of Directors

The Board of Directors oversees the operations of the community mental health and developmental services for Bennington County.

Robert Thompson, *President*  
Charles Letourneau, *Vice President*  
Nathaniel Marcoux, *Treasurer*  
William Baldwin, *Secretary*  
Dave Ballou  
Kristi Cross  
Joanna Mintzer  
Stephanie Mulligan  
Lee Romano

### Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership team is a group of talented individuals who are dedicated to community improvement and passionate about the work they do.

Lorna Mattern, *Executive Director*  
Leslie Addison, *Director of Human Resources*  
Dawn Danner, *Director of Developmental Services*  
Jill Doyle, *Director of Finance*  
Amy Fela, *Director of Operations*  
Jason Fleming, *Director of Children, Youth, and Family Services*  
Heidi French, *Director of Community Relations and Development*  
Julie Pagliccia, *Director of Northshire Services*  
Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, *Director of Early Childhood Services*  
Alya Reeve, MD, *Medical Director*  
Lori Vadakin, *Director of Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Services*

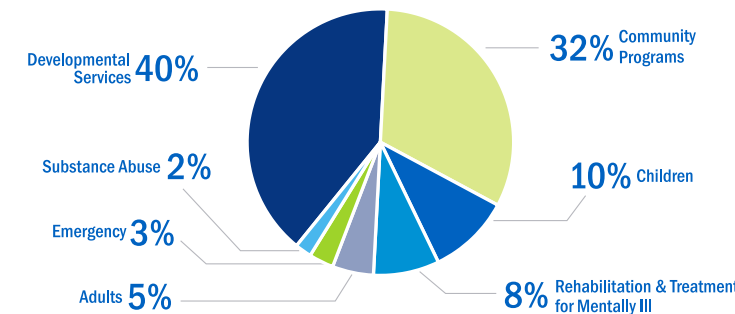
### Budgeted Income for Fiscal 2021–22

Medicaid	\$ 16,554,897
Fees & 3rd Party Payments	\$ 517,055
Vt. Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division	\$ 543,043
Vt. Dept. of Mental Health	\$ 1,137,356
Vt. Dept. of Developmental Services	\$ 100,219
Other State Contracts	\$ 521,273
Local Revenue	\$ 1,330,956
Miscellaneous	\$ 829,789
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 21,534,588</b>

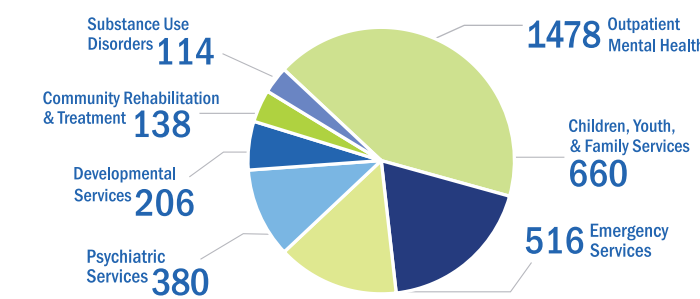
### Budgeted Expenses for Fiscal 2021–22

Salaries	\$ 10,560,442
Fringe Benefits	\$ 2,524,137
Other Personnel Costs	\$ 4,941,738
Operating Expenses	\$ 2,107,367
Travel & Transportation	\$ 334,718
Building Expenses	\$ 1,066,186
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 21,534,588</b>

### Use of Funds by Program



### Individuals Served by Program



## Community recognition

The 2021 **Harold C. "Archie" Warner Award** for service to youth was presented jointly to the **Bennington Free Library** and the **John G. McCullough Library**. Both organizations work closely with our Early Childhood Services to provide our students with opportunities to learn and grow.



UCS Executive Director Lorna Mattern presented this year's **Cleveland and Phyllis Dodge Award** for community service to **Dr. Trey Dobson** of Southwestern Vermont Medical Center. Thanks to his timely updates and consistent advice throughout the pandemic, we were able to make effective health and safety decisions for our staff and clients.

## Celebrating our staff.

Staff who stay longer help us remain competitive and able to provide the highest level of care. Each year, we publicly recognize employees who have reached milestone anniversaries, as well as those who have gone above and beyond on behalf of their community. More UCS staff are recognized on our website!



30 YEAR  
Doris Russell



15 YEAR  
April Chadwick  
Karen Sousis

10 YEAR  
Crystal Clifford  
Carol McLenithan  
Andrea Mook

Laurie Sallisky  
Jennifer Watson



5 YEAR  
Courtney Andrews  
Carolyn Brown  
Casandra Buell  
Courtney Carpenter  
Samantha Hamilton

Melody Mentiply  
Stephanie Pinsonneault  
Katherine Williams  
Lisa Woodson  
Susan Wright

## Collaborative care to treat body and mind

The Vermont Blueprint for Health is a state-led program that aims to integrate a system of health care for patients, improve the health of the overall population, and improve control over healthcare costs by promoting health maintenance, prevention, and care coordination and management.

Integrated health care blends medical with mental health services in one setting. Mental health providers work together with primary-care providers to help manage the patient's overall health, providing easily accessible treatment when psychiatric conditions are identified. It also allows for case management of challenges such as family stresses and housing insecurities—complex issues for which mental health providers are well suited to support patients, in partnership with primary care providers.

Blueprint Clinician Katie Aiken is a UCS Mental Health Clinician working in the office of Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) Pediatrics. "There is not a doubt in my mind that having Katie on site has helped to save lives," said Dr. Ghazali of SVMC Pediatrics. Notes Katie, "Many of the patients I begin working with are experiencing Mental health treatment for the first time. Knowing that they're coming to their own doctor's office where it feels less intimidating and stigmatizing helps them to accept the mental health treatment that is being offered."

When mental health issues aren't cared for, not only are behavioral symptoms likely to worsen, they also have the potential to exacerbate medical conditions. Integrating mental and physical health treatment results in care that is not only truly comprehensive but can also simplify access to various treatments for everyone.



UCS Mental Health Clinician Katie Aiken helps provide blended services in the offices of Southwestern VT Medical Center.

50%  
of all behavioral  
health disorders  
are treated in  
primary care  
settings

5  
UCS clinicians  
embedded in primary  
care offices across  
Bennington  
County

## Virtuous cycle: partnering for success

Jump on Board for Success (JOBS) is a program provided in partnership with the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. It is designed for young adults ages 16–21 facing significant emotional or behavioral challenges that create barriers to their potential and needing encouragement to discover a positive place in their community.



JOBS participant Aidan grew from a novice learner to mentoring other young adults.

The JOBS team at UCS has developed a network of local employers willing to work with our participants and help ensure long term success. This year, youth in our JOBS program learned how to repair bikes through the UCS Bike Project, a daylong intensive workshop. Working with the owner of a local bicycle shop, they not only acquired hands-on skills such as using tools and calibrating gears, they gained communication and leadership skills valuable in the workplace and beyond. As their own repair skills develop over the course of one or more workshops, the teens become mentors to more novice cyclists, sharing their newfound wisdom and encouraging others to tackle new challenges.

Aiden, a UCS JOBS program participant, comments, "I like going to the shop so I can learn different tricks and gain more knowledge in repairing bikes. I've learned so much that I'm now a mentor and can show other teens in the program how to work on their bikes."