

BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY



CLIENT HANDBOOK

24-HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

BENNINGTON

100 Ledge Hill Drive
Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 442-5491

MANCHESTER

5312 Main Street
Manchester Center, VT 05255
(802) 362-3950

HOW WE HELP

Anyone can call United Counseling Service.

We provide support, answer questions and connect you to the right resources at UCS or in the community.

We are here for you 24/7/365.

UCS is a designated Center of Excellence with Vermont Care Partners and offers:

- Community-based mental health and substance use treatment
- 24/7 mobile crisis intervention and stabilization
- Same day access for clinical intakes
- Employee assistance program
- Employment programs for clients
- Outpatient mental health and comprehensive service systems for adults, children, families, and seniors with mental illness, intellectual disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disabilities
- Community Rehabilitation and Treatment
- Bennington County Head Start / Early Head Start
- Onsite pharmacy
- Psychiatric services
- Adult family care
- Peer support groups (NAMI and Vermont Psychiatric Survivors)

Our Mission:

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

CONTENTS



Locations	2
Hours.....	3
How to Get Help.....	3
Emergency Service.....	3
Programs and Services.....	4
Non-Discrimination Notice	6
Participating in Services	7
Cancellation / Missed Appointments	8
Transition Planning and Discharge.....	8
Safety Standards / Emergency Protocol.....	9
Client Bill of Rights.....	10
Confidentiality.....	11
Client Satisfaction, Grievances, and Appeals.....	12

LOCATIONS

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

Atwood Center for Developmental Services

335 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Battelle House Crisis Stabilization Center

348 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Burgess Road Children, Youth and Family Services

21 Burgess Road, Bennington, VT 05201

Community Rehabilitation and Treatment

316 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Children, Youth and Family Services

314 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Head Start/Early Head Start Main Office

2 Park Street, North Bennington, VT 05257

(802) 442-3686

Early Head Start Infant and Toddler Center

100 Ledge Hill Drive, Bennington, VT 05201

Head Start/Early Head Start

5312 Main Street, Manchester Center, VT 05255

Head Start/Early Head Start

655 Gage Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Head Start/Early Head Start

97 School House Road, Pownal, VT 05261

UCS Residential Facilities

Autumn House Group Home

Bank Street Independent Living Complex

Gatling House Group Home

South Street Group Home

Union Street Group Home

HOURS OF OPERATION

The standard hours of operation for United Counseling Service are 8am to 7pm Monday–Thursday and 8am to 5pm on Friday. Our Northshire location is open 8am to 5pm Monday–Friday. *Some services, including residential support and crisis services, are provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.*

HOW TO GET HELP

Anyone can call United Counseling Service’s main number 802-442-5491 to get help. During regular business hours you will speak with Universal Access, our single point of contact for triage and linkage to appropriate services. Universal Access is staffed 8am–5pm Monday through Friday.

EMERGENCY SERVICE

If you are in crisis and need immediate assistance, call:

(802) 442-5491 in Bennington

or

(802) 362-3950 in Manchester.

UCS provides mental health services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When our offices are closed, the UCS Emergency Operator will take your name and phone number and a UCS representative will return your call as quickly as possible. UCS Emergency Service provides individuals in crisis with immediate assistance, offers post-crisis supportive services, and helps arrange additional services as needed.

FOR A YOUTH-RELATED CRISIS

The Family Emergency Services (FES) program provides mobile outreach services to families experiencing a youth-related crisis. The hours of operation for FES services are 8am to 6pm Monday–Friday. If you need emergency assistance, call (802) 442-1700.

After hours, your call will be answered by UCS Emergency Service Staff by calling (802) 442-5491.

FOR A DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES CRISIS

If services are needed immediately, contact DS at (802) 445-7318, 8am to 4pm Monday–Friday.

After hours your call will be answered by UCS Emergency Service Staff by calling (802) 442-5491.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mental Health Programs

- Child, adult, family, and couples outpatient counseling
- Variety of psychotherapy groups
- Mental health and intellectual disabilities evaluation
- Community education and consultation services
- Employee Assistance Program

Substance Use Programs

- Alcohol and drug use counseling, education and prevention
- Substance use treatment referrals
- Public Inebriate Program
- Assessment for and facilitation of detox or residential services
- Consultation to agencies and schools
- Intensive Outpatient Program
- Medication Assisted Treatment

Community Rehabilitation and Treatment for Adults with Severe and Persistent Mental Illness

- Transitional residential program
- Community support services
- Supported employment program
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Housing advocacy services
- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Peer support groups

Emergency Services

- 24-hour emergency service
- Battelle House Crisis Stabilization Center

Psychiatric Services

- Psychiatric evaluation
- Medication management
- Ad-hoc appointments
- Walk-in clinic
- Consultation to primary care physicians
- Psychiatric consultation services at Southern Vermont Medical Center
- Consultation to other clinicians
- TeleHealth
- Psychopharmacology genetic testing

Programs for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

- Residential services
- Community support services
- Family support services
- Employment services and ongoing job support
- Crisis services
- Shared living
- Bridge Case Management
- Family Managed Respite
- Flexible Family Funding
- Personal care assessments
- Supported Independent Living
- Case management
- Choices for Care Program (Adult Family Care)

Children, Youth and Family Services

- Psychiatric Urgent Care for Kids (PUCK)
- Family Emergency Services (FES) and crisis intervention
- Runaway and homeless youth services
- Early childhood mental health services and consultation
- Individual, group, and family counseling
- Therapeutic case management services
- Camp Be A Kid
- After School Program
- Teens4Change
- Youth in Transition
- Community skills and support
- School-based clinical services
- Employment services
- Transitional Living Programs

Early Childhood Services

- Bennington County Early Head Start
- Bennington County Head Start
- Bennington County Early Education Initiative (EEI)

NON-DISCRIMINATION NOTICE

United Counseling Service (UCS) complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. UCS does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

UCS Provides:

Free communication aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:

- Qualified sign language interpreters
- Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, etc.)

Free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:

- Qualified interpreters
- Information written in other languages

**If you need these services, contact UCS at
(802) 442-5491**

If you believe that UCS has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with UCS by mail or by phone at: UCS, Grievance Coordinator, 100 Ledge Hill Drive, PO Box 588, Bennington, VT 05201.

You may also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights online at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov>, or by mail at U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue SW, Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, DC 20201, or by phone at 1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD).

PARTICIPATING IN SERVICES

The following information is designed to help you receive the services you need as quickly and effectively as possible.

Fees

All copays are due at time of service. In some cases, fee waivers may be available in individual circumstances. Many insurance plans provide coverage for behavioral health services. If you are a Bennington County resident and are unable to pay the full fee, you can apply for reduced-fee assistance.

Our staff will review your health insurance information and, if needed, help you arrange fee assistance. Please bring your Medicaid or other insurance card with you.

Clients who are not eligible for traditional Medicaid and do not have other insurance will be provided Health Exchange information. We encourage you to apply before your first visit to assure coverage prior to treatment.

Clients who are responsible for a co-pay, co-insurance and/or deductible will be expected to pay at the time of service.

A Team Approach

Your first contact with UCS may be by phone or, during office hours, by coming directly to one of our offices. You will be connected to a Universal Access Coordinator who will ask you a few questions and inform you of our Same Day Access hours of availability.

We offer Same Day Access for Clinical Intake availability Monday through Friday to ensure individuals receive the right care, at the right time, in the right place, with the right provider. Your first appointment will last approximately 90 minutes and will include your orientation to the Agency and a comprehensive assessment. Before you leave your initial appointment, the Intake Clinician will align you with the appropriate treatment provider and you will be scheduled for your next appointment.

Much of the work done at UCS is done through a team approach. Depending on where you receive your service at UCS, you may have several staff members involved in your care.

continued...

How can I measure my progress?

Progress toward your goals that you and your treatment team identified will be evaluated throughout the course of your care. You are encouraged to give and request feedback about your progress with your team.

What if I have a problem with my treatment?

If you are having a problem with your care, first talk with your treatment provider(s). If that does not resolve the problem, you can ask to speak with your provider's supervisor. If those channels are ineffective, please see the section on the UCS grievance policy.

Cancellation and No-Show Protocol

Your engagement in services is helpful to your success. If you need to cancel your appointment, please call 802-442-5491 between 8 am and 5 pm. You may leave a detailed message and we will return the call as soon as possible. A no show happens when you do not attend scheduled appointments or provide notice of cancellation. **Our No-Show Policy states that if you miss two sessions**, we may no longer hold your future scheduled appointment time.

Transition Planning and Discharge from Care

At the beginning of your care, your treatment team will work with you on a transition plan that ensures coordination of supports during and after services at the agency. This includes your accomplishments and progress toward your goals and well-being, and identifies support systems to assist you in your continued care.

The transition planning process is person-centered and is individualized to meet your needs while you are actively receiving treatment and beyond. This plan will help you and your team determine when services are no longer needed and a discharge plan can be created.

SAFETY STANDARDS

UCS strives to provide a safe and comfortable environment for all of its clients and employees.

- **Smoking and tobacco use are prohibited** in and around all agency facilities and grounds.
- **No weapons of any kind**, including but not limited to firearms, explosives, knives, and projectiles, are allowed on UCS premises.
- **UCS is a drug- and alcohol-free** workplace.
- **UCS reserves the right to restrict access to care** due to violation of any of the above safety standards. Rights and privileges may be regained through a negotiated process with your primary service provider or his/her supervisor.
- **A person mandated to treatment by the Department of Corrections may not revoke a consent** given by them until there has been a formal and effective termination or revocation of such release. This release allows for unrestricted communications.

STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL

The agency has adopted a Standard Response Protocol to be implemented in case of emergency situations. The following protocols are to be followed, as applicable:

LOCKOUT – A threat or hazard is outside of the building. Secure the perimeter.

LOCKDOWN – There is a threat inside the building. Lock, lights, out of sight.

EVACUATE A LOCATION – Evacuate to a designated location. Occupants and staff move from one location to another.

SHELTER – Used when the need for personal protection is necessary.

Staff will guide you in the unlikely event that the Standard Response Protocol is activated.

CLIENT BILL OF RIGHTS

You have the right to:

- **Receive considerate and respectful care** that includes freedom from any physical, sexual, fiduciary (financial), or psychological abuse, including humiliating, threatening, and exploitative actions;
- **Understand what your problem is**, what treatment is recommended and why, who will give the treatment, and what outcome to expect;
- **Be involved in a process of informed choice**, informed refusal, and/or expression of choice related to preference of your treatment services, choice of service provider, and participation in research projects;
- **Expect that all** communications and records pertaining to your care will be treated as confidential;
- **Have continuity of care** when you are referred for services outside this agency;
- Examine and receive an **explanation of your bill**;
- **Participate in all aspects** of your treatment, including development of your treatment plan;
- **Have access** to self-help and advocacy services;
- **Voice complaints** or lodge an appeal without recrimination;
- **Refuse or terminate services**, except where services are required by court order;
- **All legal protection and due process** for status as an outpatient, both voluntary and involuntary, as defined under Vermont law.

Your responsibilities are...

- **To be honest** in your presentation of your problems and to tell those working with you how you feel about what is happening to you;
- **To be actively involved** in the development of your treatment plan that will outline your problems, needs, goals and expected outcome;
- **To be considerate** of others and their privacy;
- **To present to your counselor any questions, complaints or concerns** about your counseling plans or goals so that you may reach an agreement on any problem hindering your progress.

UCS Client Bill of Rights may be found online at ucsvt.org/ucs-client-resources/#client-handbook

CONFIDENTIALITY

Federal and state laws protect your confidential information. Protecting your confidentiality is important to us. All UCS employees understand the importance of confidentiality, are trained to preserve it, and are subject to disciplinary action if they violate your confidentiality. Below are exceptions specific to HIPAA and 42CFR Part 2:

- When there is a **genuine medical emergency**, or when there is **imminent danger** to a second person or others;
- When a person has a serious medical condition and is **incapable of rational communication**, the family or others may be notified;
- **When we are authorized** by the client and/or compelled to do so by the court;
- Vermont law mandates that a mental health professional, who has **reasonable cause to believe that any child has been abused or neglected**, must report such abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families.
- Additionally, any **suspicion of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of the elderly** (age 60 or older), or a **disabled adult** with a diagnosed physical or mental impairment, must be reported;
- By Vermont law, **if a clinical staff member has reason to believe that you will commit a serious crime** against either property or another person, that staff is required to take reasonable steps to warn the intended victim;
- **If you are so impaired by alcohol or other drugs** as to pose a threat to society in general (e.g. driving a car), the law is interpreted as requiring staff to take steps to protect the public by rendering you harmless (e.g. taking your keys) and/or informing proper authorities.
- **Your records are securely safeguarded.** UCS follows HIPAA and federally funded substance use treatment program (42CFR Part 2) guidelines.
- **If it becomes necessary** for UCS to release information without your permission, we will limit the information released to the minimum amount necessary under the circumstances.

For more information regarding the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and 42CFR Part 2, please see the Notice of Privacy Practices.

The UCS Privacy Policy is available online at ucsvt.org/ucs-client-resources/#client-handbook

CLIENT SATISFACTION, GRIEVANCES, AND APPEALS

Anyone receiving or participating in services and/or programs will be oriented in, and receive a copy of, the Agency's Grievance & Appeal policy and procedure upon enrollment in a program.

A grievance may be expressed orally or in writing. A client or designated representative (i.e., a person receiving services, their family member, or other person acting on their behalf) may file a grievance at any time. Staff members will assist a client if the client or their representative requests such assistance, which includes but is not limited to, auxiliary aids and services upon request, such as providing interpreter services and tollfree numbers that have TTY/TDD and interpreter capability. Clients or their representatives do not have to request a written response from the agency for their concern to be addressed as a formal grievance.

Clients may grieve a matter that is not an adverse benefit determination, including denial of a request for an expedited appeal, an extension of time by UCS for decision of a service authorization or resolving an internal appeal, quality of care or services provided, aspects of interpersonal relationships such as rudeness of a provider or employee, and the failure to respect a client's rights.

UCS will not require that grievances be put in writing before considering them formal grievances. The agency will make forms available for this purpose, but the client or their representative is not required to complete the form. Agency staff members will assist a client if they or their representative requests assistance in filing a grievance. UCS will train staff in the practices and procedures to promote prompt informal and formal resolution of disagreements.

A person receiving services, their family member, or other person acting on their behalf, having a grievance or appeal shall be offered a Grievance and Appeal Form to complete and/or an opportunity to explain the grievance or appeal to the person's primary UCS therapist, case manager or service provider, who will assist with, or complete, the Grievance and Appeal Form. The primary therapist/case manager/service provider shall report the grievance or appeal to the UCS Grievance and Appeals Coordinator, either directly or through the related Division Director, using the Grievance and Appeal Form. The original form will be forwarded to the Grievance and Appeal Coordinator. The Division Director will work with the Grievance and Appeal Coordinator to review/investigate all grievances and appeals from the initial filing through resolution.

UCS shall provide the client, free of charge, all the information in its possession or control relevant to the grievance process and the subjects of the grievance, including the client's case record, medical records, and other records and documents related to the grievance, and other information relevant to the client's grievance including relevant policies and procedures.

UCS Grievance and Appeals Policy is available at ucsvt.org/ucs-client-resources/#client-handbook

Grievance Procedure

If you believe you have been denied access to a benefit, service, program, or activity offered by UCS because of a disability, you may file a complaint with:

*Grievance and Appeals Coordinator
United Counseling Service
100 Ledge Hill Drive
P.O. Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201*

Filing of Appeals: Clients may file appeals orally or in writing for any adverse benefit determination. There is no right to appeal matters where a federal or state law requiring change has adversely affected some or all clients. Providers and representatives of the client may initiate appeals only after a clear determination that the third party's involvement is being initiated at the client's request except that providers may not request the services be continued pending appeal.

Appeals of adverse benefit determination must be filed with UCS within sixty (60) days of the date the agency's notice of adverse benefit determination. The parties to an internal appeal are the beneficiary or their representative, or the legal representative of a deceased beneficiary's estate. UCS will give clients reasonable assistance in completing forms or other steps to initiate and participate in the internal appeals process. Assistance auxiliary aids and services upon request as also noted above. Clients may also contact the Office of Health Care Advocate at 1-800-917-7787 for help with this process or decision-making about the process.

Written acknowledgement of the appeal shall be mailed within five (5) days of receipt of appeal by the agency.

Withdrawal of Appeals may be done orally or in writing at any time by clients or their representatives.

Client Participation in Appeals: The client, their authorized

representative, or their provider, if requested by the provider, has the right to participate in person, by phone, or in writing in the meeting in which UCS is considering the issue that is the subject of the appeal. This may include the right to present evidence, testimony and legal arguments. Upon request and prior to the appeal meeting, the agency shall provide timely copies of information relevant to the appeals process and the subject of the appeal, at no cost to the client. UCS shall inform the client of the scheduled appeal meeting and reschedule to accommodate individuals wishing to participate. If a meeting cannot be scheduled within the timeframe for resolving the appeal, the agency may make a decision that resolves the appeal without a meeting with the client or their representatives.

Appeals Reviewer: The UCS staff member responsible for hearing the appeal shall not have been involved in any previous level of review or decision-making, not be a subordinate of any such individual, and shall have appropriate clinical expertise of member conditions or illness when deciding an appeal of a denial of medical necessity.

Resolution: UCS shall act promptly and in good faith to obtain necessary information to resolve the appeal. The internal review shall be completed, appeals shall be decided, and written notice sent to the member within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal. The individual/representative or UCS may request an extension of up to 14 days if that extra time is in the best interests of the individual. The maximum total time period for the resolution of an appeals, including any extension requested either by the member or the Medicaid Program, is 44 days. If a meeting cannot be scheduled within these timeframes, a decision will be rendered by the Medicaid Program without a meeting with the member, the designated representative, or treating provider.

Expedited Internal Appeals Request: Expedited appeals may be requested in emergent situations in which the member or the treating provider (in making the request on the member's behalf or supporting the member's request) indicates that taking the time for a standard resolution could seriously jeopardize the member's life or health or ability to attain, maintain, or regain maximum function. Requests for expedited internal appeals may be made orally or in writing with the Medicaid Program for any adverse benefit determination subject to appeal. No punitive action may be made against a provider who requests or supports an expedited resolution.

If the request for an expedited appeal is denied because it does not meet the criteria, the Medicaid Program will inform the member that the request does not meet the criteria for expedited resolution and that the appeal will be processed within the standard 30-day time frame. An oral notice of the denial of the request for an expedited appeal must be promptly communicated (within 2 days) to the member and followed up within 2 days of the oral notification with a written notice.

If the expedited appeal request meets the criteria for such appeals, it must be resolved within 72 hours. If an expedited appeal cannot be resolved within 72 hours, the time frame may be extended up to an additional 14 days by request of the member, or by the Medicaid Program if the extension is in the best interest of the member. If the extension is at the request of the Medicaid Program, it must give the member written notice of the reason for the delay. An oral notice of the expedited appeal decision must be promptly communicated (within 2 days) to the member and followed up within 2 days of the oral notification with a written notice. The written notice for any expedited appeal determination shall include a brief summary of the appeal, the resolution, the basis for the resolution, and the member's right to request a fair hearing if not already requested.

Finally, clients shall be advised of their right to representation or the assistance of an advocate at any stage of the grievance and appeal procedure. They will also be assured of the confidentiality of the proceedings and that no retribution of any kind will result from filing a grievance or an appeal.

Fair Hearing: This is a process whereby the individual or their representative making an appeal and UCS, working with DMH and the DMH Legal Unit, each presents their side of the situation to the Human Services Board. A request for fair hearing by the Human Services Board (HSB) must be filed no later than 30 days after receipt of the adverse appeal decision or within 90 days of the original action.

Complaint Procedures of Other State or Federal Programs: Additional processes shall be followed as outlined by state or federal bodies not specified in this policy but whose regulations require a specific complaint procedure. When applicable to a UCS program, such details will be included in the division Operations Manual; an example being the Civil Rights Requirements in Child Nutrition Programs as governed by

the Vermont Agency of Education and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Client Satisfaction

UCS seeks input from clients regarding their progress and satisfaction with services. You may be asked to fill out a satisfaction survey at an office visit or when you have completed treatment. You are also encouraged to talk, first and foremost, with your primary service provider regarding any ideas you may have that would be helpful to you or would improve the overall performance of UCS.

Ethical and Professional Behavior

UCS respects the dignity of each individual served and will assist in promoting the full development of each individual's potential. All employees are required to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner and adhere to a comprehensive code of ethics. You may receive a copy of the Standard of Ethical and Professional Behavior upon request.

*UCS Standard of Ethical and Professional Behavior
is available online at
ucsvt.org/ucs-client-resources/#client-handbook*

Notices of full state procedures can be found in the Grievance and Appeal Manuals published by: The Vermont Department of Mental Health (DMH) for mental health programs; Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) for developmental services, and Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (ADAP) for substance abuse programs. The UCS Grievance and Appeals Coordinator will provide copies of state procedures upon request.

NOTES

LINKS TO RESOURCES

Visit ucsvt.org/ucs-client-resources, or scan the QR code for the most up-to-date links to client resources:



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

United Counseling Service is an affiliate of Vermont Care Partners, a statewide network of sixteen non-profit community-based agencies providing mental health, substance use and intellectual and developmental services and supports.



facebook.com/UnitedCounselingService
ucsvt.org