

# Vermont Care Partners

## Legislative Update February 2, 2016

### **Five Joint Public Hearings on the Governor's Proposed FY 2017 State Budget**

The Vermont House and Senate Committees on Appropriations are seeking public input on the FY2017 proposed State budget and will hold five joint public hearings Monday, February 15, 2016, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. at 5 locations across the State. For further information, please go to:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/jfo/link/CommunityBased%20Joint%20Public%20Hearings%20site%20list>

The Committees will take testimony on the Governor's FY 2017 State budget proposal at that time. Anyone interested in testifying should come to one of the hearings. Time limits on testimony may apply depending on the volume of participants.

To view or print a copy of the proposed budget, go to the Department of Finance and Management's website at: [http://finance.vermont.gov/state\\_budget/rec](http://finance.vermont.gov/state_budget/rec).

For more information about the format of these events, or to submit written testimony, call Theresa Utton-Jerman or Rebecca Buck, Joint Fiscal Office, 802-828-5767 or toll-free 1-800-322-5616; or e-mail: [tutton@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:tutton@leg.state.vt.us) or [rbuck@leg.state.vt.us](mailto:rbuck@leg.state.vt.us). Requests for interpreters should be made to the office by 3:00 p.m. on Monday, February 1, 2016.

### **Advocacy Events at the State House**

**Mental Health Advocacy Day on March 17th.** The full spectrum of our services will be addressed including developmental disabilities and substance use disorder services. We will be looking to have a big turnout at the state house to educate and advocate for our services.

### **Recovery Day February 17, 2016**

### **Disability Awareness Day March 23, 2016**

### **House Appropriations Committee Hears Overview of Fiscal Year 2017 Human Services Budget**

Hal Cohen, the Secretary of the Agency of Human Services gave the highlights on what the fiscal year 2017 budget proposal hopes to accomplish. To address the 500 people waiting for opioid treatment a new Hub will be put in place the St. Albans area. To address the 100 suicides experienced in Vermont each year they will increase funding for suicide prevention. Additionally, they will be increasing supportive housing with Medicaid funds. He also highlighted the improved use of outcomes, specifying that by July 1<sup>st</sup> AHS will have outcome measures in place in the designated and specialized service agency grant agreements.

Here are highlights from the memorandum to the House Appropriations committee.

“Closing the FY 2017 budget gap was a challenging process that resulted in difficult choices within the Agency of Human Services. Our goal in balancing the budget was to provide funding to support the core

mission and functions of the Agency and its departments. This budget enhances Child Protection Services, provides funding for Medicaid caseload, expands provider tax revenue while also increasing Medicaid rates for Dentists and Physicians, increases funds for opiate treatment and expands the family supportive housing program.

We are presenting a budget of just over \$2.5B when adjusted for the Global Commitment double count in the appropriations, an increase of 14.6M or 2.2%.

#### Provider Tax Expansion

The Governor has proposed a 2.35% provider tax on physicians not presently employed by hospitals and on all dentists. This will raise an additional \$17.0M in state revenue. After grossing up the state revenue, it will be used for 3 reinvestments: about \$26M for the Medicaid enrollment increases; Medicaid rate increases for primary care providers to restore an increase in the ACA that sunset (\$8.4M GC) and Medicaid rate increases for preventative dental (\$2.2M GC). This budget also provides the resources at DVHA to successfully implement these changes.

#### AHS Secretary's Office Appropriations:

- A 10% (\$47,416) reduction to the Vermont Legal Aid contract. Page 4
- We have eliminated our grants (\$204,750) for the AHS Secretary's Office Field Directors for direct services and service coordination. This will impact either contracted services or direct service dollars depending on the needs of each community
- The above reduction is offset by investing in VISTA volunteers to support Field Directors (\$18,000)

#### DVHA:

- Funds Medicaid caseload and utilization growth (\$70M all funds)
- Implements a best practice approach for Involuntary Medication (-5.0M GC)
- Transitions health care coverage from Medicaid to Qualified Health Plans for pregnant persons between 138% and 213% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (-\$4.9M GC). The Administration is currently looking at other options to offset this reduction.

#### VDH:

- Expands the Opioid Antagonist program (\$200K SF – evidence based education & advertising fund - EBEA) and enhances the prescription drug disposal program (\$50K SF - EBEA).
- Allows for the Medical Assisted Treatment (MAT) Hub expansion with a January 1, 2017 implementation start date (\$420K GC).

#### DMH:

- Supports Suicide Prevention efforts (\$72,724 GC).
- Provides funding for peer services for young adults, preserves transitional housing related to HUD and the Vermont Cooperative for Practice Improvement (VPCI) (\$448K GC).

#### DCF:

- Annualizes the increases to Family Services to address Child Protection issues as also contained within the FY16 BAA.
- Restructures residential treatment services (-674.6K).
- Adds funding to support Emergency Housing and continues the cold-weather shelter program (\$1M).
- Expands the Family Supportive Housing program by expanding services using Medicaid Funding (\$238K net increase)."

DAIL:

- Funded Developmental Services Caseload increase at \$8.0M Gross

### **Senate Health and Welfare Takes Testimony on Tobacco-Free Campuses**

The Department of Mental Health indicated that they are postponing for a year the requirement that all designated agency campuses, including residential facilities, become tobacco free. However, the overall consensus from the state leaders was to keep pushing forward on achieving the goal of tobacco free campuses.

Mary Moulton, Executive Director of Washington County Mental Health Services informed the Committee that her agency is smoke free, but she did speak to the difficulties they are having in their crisis programs and noting they are still problem solving. She was not speaking on behalf of Vermont Care Partners. Written testimony by Vermont Care Partners will be submitted to the Committee. Mary Moulton's testimony can be found at this link:

<http://legislature.vermont.gov/committee/document/2016/27/Witness/Mary%20Moulton>

Substance Abuse providers who testified were not supportive of the tobacco free policy.

### **To take action or for more information, including the weekly committee schedules:**

- Legislative home page: <http://www.leg.state.vt.us>
- Sergeant-at-Arms Office: (802) 828-2228 or (800) 322-5616
- State House fax (to reach any member): (802) 828-2424
- State House mailing address (to reach any member):

Your Legislator

State House

115 State Street, Drawer 33

Montpelier, VT 05633-5501

- Email, home address and phone: Legislators' email addresses and home contacts may be found on the Legislature home page at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us>
- Governor Peter Shumlin (802) 828-3333 or <http://governor.vermont.gov/>

The purpose of the legislative update is to inform individuals who are interested in developmental, mental health and substance abuse services about legislative advocacy, policy development and activities that occur in the State Legislature. The Vermont Council is a non-profit trade association whose membership consists of 16 designated developmental and mental health agencies.

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