



Helping people and communities live healthy, safe and satisfying lives.

## Legislative Update January 5, 2018

### *Upcoming Advocacy Events*

**Join in Mental Health Advocacy Day on Wednesday, January 31, 2018**

***Make Your Voice Heard!  
"Caring for Vermonters "Investing in Mental Health"***

The event is hosted and organized by NAMI-VT, The Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery (VAMHAR) and Vermont Care Partners. All of our members are co-sponsors along with many other organizations for a total of 40 co-sponsors. 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. This will be an important day to raise the political profile of developmental, mental health and substance use disorder services. Please contact Julie if you know of an individual who would like to testify in a legislative committee or to those assembled in Room 11. A flyer and the agenda are attached.

We will be advocating for greater investment in our services so that we can provide accessible quality care with an experienced and skilled workforce. The agenda includes advocacy training, opportunities to interact with legislators, providing testimony and listening to personal stories of lived experience. The day starts at 8:00 AM in the State House Cafeteria where you can meet with your legislators. Please make appointments in advance either for the morning coffee hour or lunch.

At 9:00 AM there will be advocacy training conducted by Peter Mallary and Ed Paquin.

At 10:00 AM State Leaders will address the attendees including Governor Scott, Secretary of Human Services Al Gobeille, Mental Health Commissioner Bailey and Legislators. Awards will be given to Legislators who were critical to the passage of Act 82 and to Team Two training leaders

### **Advocacy Training**

This additional advocacy training will prepare you to conduct successful meetings with legislators and create a short compelling personal stories that have an "ask" for Mental Health advocacy Day.

- When: Saturday, January 13, 2018 - 1:00-4:00 p.m.
- Where: Christ Church, 64 State Street, Montpelier
- Trainers: Peter Mallary of VAMHAR and Ed Paquin of DRVT

Register now to reserve your space in this free training:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSen\\_8t7kiapMQurK-QEnIlwsrpZeY-ss5FeOOAdveQ22qQzuQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSen_8t7kiapMQurK-QEnIlwsrpZeY-ss5FeOOAdveQ22qQzuQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

### **Legislative Action**

#### **House and Senate Health Care Committees will Collaborate on Mental Health**

Senate Health and Welfare Committee Chair Senator Ayer and House Health Care Committee Chair Representative Bill Lippert plan to collaborate on different aspects of mental health care during the upcoming session. One of their first activities will be to review the myriad of reports required of the administration. Legislative Counsel Jen Carbee collected the documents on the attached document that has links to each required report.

In pre-session testimony to the House Health Care Committee Mental Health Commissioner Bailey highlighted her initial priorities:

- Implementing Strengthening Families Framework
- Working with child care and schools to be trauma informed
- Implementing Building Flourishing Communities
- Working with DCF to implement evidence based early childhood and family mental health
- Integrating children and family services across the Agency of Human Services
- Payment reform to create flexibility and focus on outcomes and quality
- Increase capacity for forensics, level 1 beds and secure residential
- Examine licensing rules regarding emergency involuntary procedures and involuntary treatment
- Assure crisis beds are fully utilized and explore alternatives that people are willing to access
- Expand mobile crisis outreach so individuals can be diverted from the Emergency Departments
- Continue to explore or build geriatric psychiatric care
- Supportive housing for people coming out of inpatient or to prevent inpatient or crisis services
- Adding resources to assure training in evidence based practices
- Peer services to be expanded and supported
- Expand mental health treatment court

The Commissioner acknowledged that staffing issues at hospitals, DA/SSAs and DMH continue to be a challenge.

#### **Budget Adjustment Act Highlights**

AHS Secretary Gobeille and Chief Financial Officer for AHS Sarah Clark presented the Governor's proposals for budget adjustment on December 18th. He described the transfer of funds from DMH to DAIL to balance workforce investment for designated and specialized service agencies (DA/SSAs) as revenue neutral and acknowledged the problems that occurred with implementation including the four agencies that are a little short of the necessary allocation to meet the goal \$14/hour minimum wage for all employees.

The DMH budget adjustment includes:

- Position Transfer for Integrated Family Services from AHS (net-neutral);
- Hill House Emergency Bed Funding (\$30K gross);
- PNMI Rate Increase & Extraordinary Relief (\$30K GF, \$295K Gross);
- Street Outreach Workers (\$200K).

The four regions of the state who will receive the \$200,000 for street outreach workers were chosen due to high rates of back up in the emergency rooms, high inpatient utilization and housing issues.

Secretary Gobeille was questioned about the workforce issues at DA/SSAs and shared his report based on the data provided by Vermont Care Partners. Both Chairs of the Appropriations Committees, Senator Kitchel and Representative Toll, are most interested in the outcome of the \$8.37 million workforce investment and whether there has been a positive impact on emergency department utilization.

### **Vermont Care Partners Workforce Analysis**

#### **Vermont Care Partners Workforce Report**

Quality care is dependent on well-trained and experienced staff. Unfortunately, over the years DA/SSAs have been experiencing significant challenges recruiting and retaining a qualified workforce with an average staff turnover rate of 26%. In FY'16 and vacancy rates went as high as 10% due to poor compensation levels. The agencies, through Vermont Care Partners, advocated for greater investment in the workforce.

During the first part of the biennium the Legislature responded to this crisis by passing Act 82 the Mental Health and Care Coordination Act and including specific language in fiscal year 2018 (FY'18) Appropriations Act (Act 85) calling for analysis and actions to address the workforce crisis. Act 85 appropriated \$8.37 million in FY'18 for increased payment to DA/SSAs to fund the cost of increasing the hourly wages of employees to \$14 per hour and to fund salary increases for crisis response and crisis bed personnel to advance the goal of achieving more competitive compensation. There was a specific focus on addressing the critical issue of people in psychiatric crisis being held in hospital emergency rooms because of unavailability of inpatient or other appropriate care in a timely way. Additionally, the Act requires the Secretary of Human Services to estimate funding to further increase salaries to achieve a \$15 per hour minimum wage and to achieve competitive compensation for clinical and other employees.

Vermont Care Partners developed the attached report to assist the Secretary of Human Services to complete the requirements specified in Section E.314.2 of Act 85 per his request.

#### ***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 Phil Scott (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 which works in partnership with Vermont Care Network to form Vermont Care Partners. Together our mission is to provide statewide leadership for an integrated, high quality system of comprehensive services and supports. Our membership consists of 16 designated developmental and mental health agencies.