



# VERMONT CARE PARTNERS

Supporting Vermonters to lead healthy and satisfying lives community by community

## Legislative Update for March 6, 2020



*This is the last week of the session before the town meeting day week-long break during the first week of March. When Legislators are back in your community it will be a good time to check in with them and let them know your perspectives on issues and priorities for the fiscal year 2021 Budget.*



### SAVE THESE DATES

#### **Thursday, March 12, Vermont State House – Disability Awareness Day**

Disability Awareness Day, at the State House, 9:00 to 6:00. Sponsored by the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights. Join self-advocates, families, providers and others for a day of advocacy, workshops, refreshments, a keynote speech by Ed Paquin from Disability Rights Vermont will occur at 4:30 to 6:00 on “Is Vermont Heading in the Direction of True Access and Real Inclusion?” Then a panel of legislators: Senator Anthony Pollina, Representative John Killacky, Representative Kevin “Coach” Christie and Representative Anne Donahue will shed light on how their personal experience with disability informs their legislative work.

#### **Friday, March 13, Davis Center, University of Vermont – STEPPING FORWARD TOGETHER 2020: Creating Solutions that Promote Health Equity**

Vermont Care Partners Annual conference will enable you to join national and regional experts to learn how to promote equity in your community. The conference includes over 20 workshops on topics:

- Promotion of Cultural and Linguistic Competence
- Collaboration with Faith Based Leaders to Promote Health Equity for All
- Tracking “isms” in Systems for People with Disabilities
- Disrupting White Supremacy Culture Organizations
- LGTBQ+ Inclusion in the Behavioral Health System
- Making Room at the Table: A Model for Real Peer Leadership

- Understanding the Impact of Untreated Adverse Childhood Experiences on the Health and Well-being of Vermonters with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Understanding Adoption Competent Care
- Leading from Where You Are: How to Affect Policy and Legislative Decisions

**This year's featured speakers:**

**Sydney Hankerson, MD**

Co-Director, Columbia University Wellness Center Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Columbia University, Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons Assistant Attending, New York-Presbyterian Hospital Research Scientist, New York State Psychiatric Institute

**Vivian H. Jackson, Ph.D., ACSW**

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Senior Policy Associate National Center for Cultural Competence Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development Washington, DC

**Maria Mercedes Avila, Ph.D.**

Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Larner College of Medicine, University of Vermont

For further information and registration here is the link:

<https://vermontcareSTEPPING FORWARD TOGETHER 2020: Creating Solutions that Promote Health Equitypartners.org/2020conference/>

## ***What Happened This Week***

### **House Appropriations Committee Deliberates the FY21 Budget Recommendations**

With a projected \$9 million shortfall in ongoing funds and many requests for the available one-time funds the House Appropriations Committee is methodically working through their budget analysis and setting priorities for the FY21 state budget. Input from the policy committees is carefully being reviewed, as is input from advocates. Here are some of the issues they are considering that are relevant to designated and specialized service agencies (DA/SSAs).

In the review of the recommendations of the House Health Care Committee there were questions about the mental health pilot programs, one of which is currently receiving funding from OneCare. They questioned why the State should pay for its continuation instead of OneCare and expressed concern about setting precedent. There were also questions about the Rutland mobile response pilot. Why wasn't there an RFP and how does it fit into the larger system of care?

Representative Dave Yacavone raised the question of the funding for the DA/SSA system, "Where is the further analysis about why so many are in crisis?" Representative Mary Hooper would like to see an increase in rates for DAs. She said if we can't identify ongoing funds for a rate increase, she would like to look at onetime expenses for infrastructure.

Representative Diane Lanpher is analyzing the developmental services budget and wondering about the cut of \$3.8 million in "close-out" funds which have been used for other functions in the past, especially in light of the upcoming changes in the system of care like the new separate assessment process. She wants to know how the new functions to achieve conflict of interest free case management will be funded.

The House Human Services Committee in their letter to the Appropriations Committee prioritized Children's Integrated Services (CIS). They recommend rates to reflect the Burns and Associates study which are higher than the Governor's proposed rate. This would cost an additional \$1.2 million.

Because the Department for Children and Families' responses to the request for proposals on alternatives to Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center weren't due until February 28th, the Committee did not feel prepared to make a comprehensive recommendation at this time. However, they think it is clear that the proposed closure of Woodside by July 1, 2020 is unrealistic and that it will likely need to operate with a reduced staff for the time being.

In the Governor's budget \$5.7 million from the closure of Woodside was redirected for other expenditures. So, if the closure is delayed it will impact the expenditures, too.

Representative Hooper is worried that some youth may be temporarily placed in DOC facilities until a more appropriate placement is found. Ken Schatz's reported response was that Marble Valley is already being used for that purpose with sight and sound barriers to separate the youth from adult inmates. Representative Hooper will follow up with budget language on Woodside.

House Appropriates listened to the feedback from the Policy Committees requesting a one-year delay on the transfer of the administration of general assistance (GA) housing to community agencies. The committee had questions on this issue. For instance, what if more shelter beds are needed? They had Department of Children and Families Commissioner Ken Schatz come in to discuss the issue.

Ken Schatz said he won't belabor the issue of a June 1 start date for transferring the GA emergency housing program but noted that the system is not working well now. He conceded that the reality is that there is some value to have a spring implementation date, but he wants to keep it clear that the legislative intent is to go forward with the decision. He also plans to work with Rutland to develop a new shelter. DCF is committed to remain involved in the system of care to address the homeless. Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) staff will work with communities to address emergency housing needs.

There has been an increase in demand, but it ebbs and flows. There could be a need for more support in the future, if so DCF will take a leadership role in working with communities. Right now motels are taking a major role, but they are limited so it's essential to expand other community capacities including shelters, motel rooms, and others.

Staff capacity at community providers also needs to be considered. The model has an expectation that communities will retain additional staff to manage their new responsibilities. Some communities have more staff resources to manage the new responsibilities than others. The expectation is that every community will have money to add staff resources.

Sean Brown said when someone calls 211 after hours, the 211 staff determine if the person is eligible for general assistance. After the switch, it will be a simpler process for 211 to make a referral to the local providers without determining General Assistance eligibility. It will be a community-based grant program which will allow communities to have flexibility. Each community already has a lead agency. Instead of an RFP, they may let each region identify their own lead agency.

In the end the Committee agreed on transition to the Community of GA Emergency Housing Program on April 1<sup>st</sup> per Commissioner Schatz's feedback.

### **Senate Health and Welfare Returns to Rutland Mobile Response Bill**

The Senate Health and Welfare Committee returned to S.302, the bill that sets policy for the Rutland Mobile. A few minor corrections were made in the date and geographic location was changed from Rutland city to county. There was discussion about whether the funding will be \$400,000 as in the Bill or the \$600,000 which was requested in the Governor's budget. The Committee landed on \$400,000. The Committee approved the bill and now it will be considered by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

### **Justice Reinvestment Bill Passes the Senate**

The Justice Reinvestment passed the Senate and is now being taken up by the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions.

### **S.183 on Insanity and Competency Ready for Passage by the Senate**

S.183, an act relating to competency to stand trial and insanity as a defense was passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee after review by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee. It is now up for a final vote in the Senate with a minor amendment by Senator Nitka before proceeding to the House.

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

- Legislative home page: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>
- 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 <https://legislature.vermont.gov/>
- 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.