

# COVID-19 Response

*To protect the safety of clients and the community during the pandemic, many Eldercare clinicians embraced telehealth and audio-only services to maintain a connection with their clients and support their mental health.*

*27% of Eldercare clients accessed care via telehealth in FY21, an increase of 23% from FY20.*

*At the same time, some Eldercare programs reported that their clinicians who met with clients at their homes may have been the only face-to-face contacts those clients had all week, especially as caregiver shortages in personal care and home health increased.*

*VCP and network agencies worked with the state to distribute one-time COVID Relief Funds to enhance Eldercare programs in several regions of the state during FY21:*

- Added case management at CSAC
- Tech support, telehealth, and outreach at Howard Center
- Older Adult Mental Health First Aid at NCSS
- CAMS training for Eldercare Clinicians at NKHS and RMHS
- CAMS, CALM, and Collaborative Network training at WCMHS

***“If I didn’t have services from mental health I would be dead. My counselor made me feel worthy of being in this world. I do not feel as depressed always, still struggle sometimes but I am happy to have asked for help or this would not have been written.”***  
– Eldercare Client at RMHS/CCN

## The Eldercare Clinician Program



### MEETING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF HOMEBOUND OLDER VERMONTERS

The Eldercare Clinician Program provides mental health services and supports to homebound older Vermonters. Barriers to office-based care can include significant mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety as well as transportation barriers, poor health, and/or lack of other social supports. Eldercare Clinicians receive referrals from, and collaborate closely with, Area Agencies on Aging.

Older Vermonters' higher risk for anxiety, depression, and suicide can be caused by social isolation, financial stress, and loss of loved ones. 13% of adults over the age of 65 report that they “rarely or never” receive social or emotional support, compared to 9% of the general population. Rates of suicide in Vermonters ages 60-84 are consistently higher than the national average, making the outreach clinical work done by Eldercare programs essential and life-saving.

### REACH

- Over 3,300 services provided to over 270 older Vermonters statewide in the Eldercare Program.
- 47% of clients were seen in their home; 46% in the community, and 27% using telehealth.
- On average, Eldercare clients received 14 services.

In addition to clients in the Eldercare Program who are homebound, network agencies served over 1,400 Vermonters over the age of 65 across mental health and substance use disorder services. This is a growing sector of our service population with unique physical and social needs.



NKHS provides Eldercare Services to Vermonters who live in Orleans, Essex, and Caledonia counties. NKHS opened its doors in August of 1960 as Northeast Family Counseling Services. 2020 marks their sixtieth year of service.



Debbie Bashaw and Cheryl Huntly from Counseling Service of Addison County.