



Supporting Vermonters to lead healthy and satisfying lives community by community

### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FOR JANUARY 10, 2023



#### **The new Legislative Biennium begins on January 4th**

This year we have many new legislators who have much to learn about a myriad of public policy issues. Let's work together to educate them about our values, services, and the challenges faced by members of our community with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and who use substances.

#### **Legislative Committees Appointed**

There are many new Committee Chairs and new members on the Committees. Here are the key Committees in relation to our network services with the Agencies in each legislator's region noted. We encourage everyone to reach out to your local legislators to introduce yourself and share the issues most important to you.

House Committee on Human Services  
House Committee on Health Care  
House Committee on Judiciary  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Senate Committee on Health and Welfare  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Please see this link for a full list of members and the agencies in their districts:

[Legislative Committees by DA and SSA Region](#)

#### **Governor Presents Inaugural Address**

On January 5<sup>th</sup> Governor Phil Scott gave his inaugural speech. Here are his remarks related to mental health. "12 years after Tropical Storm Irene, we still have not finished rebuilding our mental health system. This has led to fewer options for patients. And too often they end up in emergency departments, which are not equipped to care for them, despite the nurses and doctors doing their best to help. It's a reminder of what happens when we lose focus on the fundamentals and don't finish what we start. We have important work to do across the entire system to better integrate mental and physical health. But I know, if we make these goals a priority and work together in good faith, we can deliver better access and higher quality at a cost Vermonters can afford."

There was no mention of intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) services. The Governor's substance use remarks were oriented around prevention and support to youth

## **The Administration's Budget Adjustment Proposal Presented to the House Appropriations Committee**

On Friday, January 6<sup>th</sup> Commissioner of Finance and Management Adam Greshin presented the Governor's budget adjustment proposal for fiscal year 2023. He informed the House Appropriations Committee that the enhanced federal match has been extended leading to \$85 million more in federal funds than originally anticipated. The bottom line of the total budget adjustment request, after shifting around many line items, is a \$1.3 million addition general fund.

DMH has a total increase \$8,936,289 which includes: \$11.2M for Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospitals traveling nurse contracts; \$420K for private nonmedical institution inflation adjustments, \$372K for the UVMHC contract, \$97K for the WCMHS micro residential program, and \$30K for CSAC intensive family-based services. There is also a request for a one-time expenditure of \$9,225,000 for Southwestern Vermont Medical Center to develop a 12 – 14 bed psychiatric unit for youth with the goal of opening in January 2024.

There is an increase of \$2,541,518 for DAIL developmental disability services of which \$1.4 million is to address public safety caseload pressure (5 Individual at \$285K) and \$1.1 million is for the Upper Valley Services crisis beds start-up costs.

In the language section of the bill there are workforce development funds grants to health care employers, including designated and specialized service agencies access “to establish or expand partnerships with Vermont nursing schools to create nursing pipeline or apprenticeship programs, or both, that will train members of the health care employers’ existing staff, including personal care attendants, licensed nursing assistants, and licensed practical nurses, to become higher-level nursing professionals. Through a combination of scholarship awards, grants awarded to health care employers pursuant to this section, grants awarded to health care employers pursuant to Act 183 of 2022 Sec. 22, and the health care employer’s contributions, the trainees’ tuition and fees shall be covered in full, and trainees shall be provided with assistance in meeting their living costs, such as housing and child care, while attending the program.”

## **Virtual Legislative Advocacy Training - January 23<sup>rd</sup> from 12 - 1 PM**

### **Free and Open to All**

Please join in this free one-hour Vermont Care Partners Webinar to learn how the legislature works, and how you can become a strong and effective advocate. We will discuss how to reach out, communicate and build positive relationships with your legislative representatives and senators. Tips will be given to enable you to feel comfortable sharing your personal stories, discussing policy issues, and advocating for investment in mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance use services.

Please register with this [link](#).

## **Join us at Mental Health Advocacy Day – Mental Health Starts with YOUTH**

### **Monday, January 30, 2023, 10 AM - 2 PM**

We'll meet virtually to call on Vermont leaders and legislators to let them know “Mental Health Starts with YOUTH.” Let's be the generation that replaces mental health stigma with mental health support.

The morning will be filled with welcome addresses from state leaders, a keynote plenary session, and special awards. This year's keynote speaker is Alexina Federhen, Miss Vermont 2022. The afternoon

features opportunities for people to share their stories of hope and recovery. There are also opportunities to provide testimony at key legislative committees.

### **Who should attend?**

Mental health advocates, peers, family members, professionals, providers, community members, and mental health stakeholders.

### **Register to Attend**

Click the button below to register for Mental Health Advocacy Day. Once you have registered, you will receive an email with the Zoom link to use for the event.

[Register Now](#)

### **Get Involved**

#### **Share Your Story**

Attendees have the opportunity to share their lived experience story, a poem, or other insights at the event. Each participant will have 2–3 minutes to speak. You may pre-record your story or share it live on January 30. If you plan to pre-record your story, please read the guidelines before doing so.

[Guidelines](#)

[Share Your Story](#)

#### **Provide Testimony**

Following Mental Health Advocacy Day, we invite participants to share testimony with House or Senate Committees between January 31 and February 3.

We will reach out to Committee Chairs to request the opportunity to share testimony. There is no guarantee that we can testify to certain committees. This is at the discretion of the Committee Chairs. If you need help in creating testimony, we suggest [NAMI Smarts Legislative Advocacy training](#).

[Register to Testify](#)

#### **Vermont Care Partners Advocacy Fact Sheet**

Here is a link to our Advocacy Fact Sheet: [Vermont Care Partners Advocacy Fact Sheet](#)

The critical points are the rising demand, the impact of the ongoing workforce crisis and need for improved funding.

#### **Youth Mental Health Advocacy Award**

If you know someone who has made a positive impact on youth mental health, considering nominating them for the Youth Mental Health Advocacy Award. To do so, please submit a brief (no more than 1–2 page) description of why your nominee should receive the 2023 Mental Health Advocacy Award by January 13<sup>th</sup> to Julie Tessler at [julie@vermontcarepartners.org](mailto:julie@vermontcarepartners.org). Please refer only to the specific criteria

below that apply to your candidate; it is not necessary to address all four criteria. Examples of their work, achievements and/or impact are helpful. The individual may be a young person or an older person who focuses their attention on children, youth, and families.

### **Nominee Criteria**

#### **1. Influences Public Policy**

Exemplifies outstanding passion advocating on behalf of children and youth experiencing trauma, substance use, a mental health condition, or intellectual/developmental disability to successfully influence public policy.

#### **2. Reduces Stigma**

Actively strives to reduce stigma, improve awareness, inspire others, and influence public opinion by speaking out about their own or the experiences of other children and youth with trauma, substance use, mental health conditions or intellectual/developmental disability.

#### **3. Overcomes Barriers to Services**

Demonstrates strong commitment and success in supporting children and youth experiencing trauma, substance use, mental health condition or intellectual/developmental disability in overcoming barriers and challenges with accessing necessary services and supports in the community.

#### **4. Displays Leadership**

Active leadership in local, regional and/or statewide groups that address trauma, mental health conditions, substance use or intellectual/developmental disability which successfully impact access to quality services and/or peer support, informs public policy, or improves public awareness and education.

### **Agenda**

**10:00–10:10 a.m.** Welcome and Introduction

**10:10–11 a.m.** Remarks by State Leaders

**11:00–11:45 a.m.** Keynote Address: Alexina Federhen, Miss Vermont 2022

**11:45–12:00 p.m.** Youth Mental Health Advocacy Award

**12:00–12:30 p.m.** Lunch Break

**12:30–2:00 p.m.** Sharing Our Stories (live and pre-recorded)

**Jan. 31–Feb. 3: Testimony at Key Legislative Committees**

*Hosted by:*



**The Vermont Association for  
Mental Health & Addiction Recovery**



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.