



**Supporting Vermonters to lead healthy and satisfying lives community by community**

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FOR JANUARY 3, 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.

### **Vermont Care Partners Legislative Agenda for 2023**

Vermont Care Partners is again setting a 10% Medicaid Rate Increase as our top priority. Why? While the 8% rate hike appropriated for FY23 has stopped spiraling increase in staff vacancies, the vacancy rates as of October 1, 2022, for intellectual and developmental disability services (I/DD) was 24.1% and for mental health/substance use was 20.3%, with the FY22 staff turnover rate at 33.6%. This means that many of the positions at agencies are filled with people who are either relatively new to their jobs, or simply non-existent. The prime reason staff leave agencies or decide not to accept job offers relates to the poor compensation rates, which are limited by the Medicaid payment rates. Workforce stability is the foundation for providing Vermonters with access to quality services provided by skilled and experience staff. With growing demand for services and with increasing acuity and complexity of service needs, this is a critical time to invest in community-based mental health, I/DD and substance use services.

Here is the link to the full Legislative Agenda: [Legislative Agenda 2023 working draft 1A](#)  
Vermont Care Partners updates the agenda as the session proceeds and issues arise and develop. We welcome your feedback.

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.

## **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. We will give tips 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:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81615213968?pwd=MmFYZEVWNncrYy9iSzVUMGdoTW42Zz09>

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

**Monday, January 30, 2023, 10–2 p.m.**

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 is 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 will 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](#)

### **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**



**VERMONT  
CARE  
PARTNERS**

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.