

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

A long-held value and practice of the Department of Mental Health is stakeholder engagement. We all have gone forward together during periods of remarkable change, challenge, and accomplishment. Representatives of the mental health community have come to the table to hear updates from us as well as to share their perspectives of ways to address issues of significance to the people we are here to serve. One of the forums in place since 2007 was the Mental Health Transformation Council. Established in statute when the State was making plans to replace the state hospital, this body appointed by the Commissioner met nearly every month for eight years to help drive and stay on top of what became the reconfigured and dispersed mental health care system of facilities and services in place today. The sunset clause of the statute provided that the Transformation Council shall cease to exist when development of the alternatives to the Vermont state hospital is completed, but no later than September 1, 2015. After the last piece of the new array of programs opened—Soteria Vermont—outgoing commissioner Paul Dupre convened the Transformation Council for the last time, thanking everyone for meaningful dialogue that truly played a role in shaping and building today's mental health system. There remain various opportunities for continued public input and advisory roles, most prominently the State Program Standing Committees for Adult Mental Health and Children's Mental Health. The Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Advisory Committee meets monthly with the hospital's leadership team. Ad hoc study committees on specific issues also contribute to the work of DMH. Stakeholder engagement will continue.

--- Frank Reed, Interim Commissioner

MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

- **Managing the System of Care**

The Adult Care Management Team was expanded following the crisis precipitated by Tropical Storm Irene. We are now approaching the four-year mark since that storm devastated the former state hospital in Waterbury. A re-building of the system of care has taken place in a remarkably short time, providing access to a greater number and diversity of programs and facilities than ever before. The movement of individuals from one level of care to the next is vital in optimizing Vermont's system of care to ensure access to services is available to other Vermonters when they need them – the right level of care at the right time. As one program after another has been completed, the management needs of the system continue to be scrutinized. Now that all of the Act 79

facilities are operating, DMH re-examined how the Adult Care Management Team was working. Over the last six weeks, the Adult Care Management Team has undergone a structural change to better meet the needs of our changing mental health system and to evolve as the new, dispersed system matures. Following Tropical Storm Irene, the Care Management Team members all focused on both admissions and discharges across the state with each care manager covering their “catchment” area. With emergency room wait times diminishing with the opening of all Level I beds, one care manager now oversees all admissions into hospitals, two are primarily focused on discharges from inpatient units as well as admissions to the Intensive Recovery Residences, and the fourth works with Designated Agencies on the oversight of ONH’s (Orders of Non-hospitalization) as well as collaborating with the Department of Corrections on more complex re-entry planning for inmates with mental health needs returning to their communities. These modifications in care management assignments have received positive feedback from our community partners. We hope that these changes have a positive impact on people and the ability of the system of care to serve them in the most appropriate settings.

- **Supported Employment**

Laura Flint, MSW, Supported Employment Coordinator for DMH, shares the perspective of a young father seeking employment. Their conversation sheds light on how we engage individuals in their own recovery through employment. (Client’s written permission obtained for this story.)

Money isn’t Every Thing to This Young Father, but Working is

Before me stands a clean-shaven young man in his late twenties named Josh Ciampi. New jeans and a stylish, grey t-shirt compliment his tall, athletic build. The polite smile he manages when he meets me does little to hide his nervousness. It makes sense that he’s apprehensive about my visit. He has never met me and yet, here I am interested in his work and curious about the details of his journey towards recovery and full-time employment. I am curious about how he has been successful and has learned to navigate life with a mental illness.

It is clear his journey has not been easy. He has received care at an in-patient hospital specializing in psychiatric services, lived through the scary experience of having symptoms of psychosis only to have another similar experience not long after. He lost an outdoor job he liked, a tram operator at Jay Peak, in the process. Being without employment really impacted his sense of self and diminished his hope for the future. He was living with his parents without anything to do and things were getting worse. Ciampi is a father and his goal to be more involved with his young son’s life motivated him to not just give up. He knew finding another job would help. The therapeutic staff with whom he worked at Northeast Kingdom Human Services knew this as well. The staff placed Ciampi in touch with the employment counselor.

“She asked me a lot of questions about the kind of work I would like to do. She got to know me,” reported Ciampi. “He wanted to do physical labor and preferably outdoors,

but he needed to remain local,” reported Dawn Philip, the employment counselor. Philip believed in Ciampi’s ability to work and immediately began talking with local employers about their business needs and the responsibilities associated with their positions. After sharing what she was learning with Ciampi, they decided together to pursue a position with LaPierre’s, a local home decorating business that specializes in laying flooring.

The owner of LaPierre’s, Randy Davis, was a bit hesitant at first. According to Philip, he wanted to have reassurance that Ciampi was reliable, capable, flexible with his hours, and able to easily learn flooring and other job responsibilities. He had not yet met Ciampi, but agreed to interview him. After the interview, Davis decided to give Ciampi a chance using a progressive employment approach through the local Vocational Rehabilitation office. This approach allowed LaPierre’s to receive assistance with training Ciampi and determine if the position was a good match prior to officially hiring him.

To learn more about how this process went, I met with LaPierre’s owners, Randy and Valerie Davis, at their store. “[Ciampi] is a very nice young man. He arrived at work every day ready to work. We definitely got a sense of where his skills were and used that knowledge to determine what tasks to ask him to complete. We learned about him and what he needed for training and where he shined,” reported the Davises. They told me that working with the NKHS employment counselor was great. “[She] was someone we could call to ask questions. She helped us feel more comfortable. We certainly feel supported in our roles as employers.” Ciampi echoes that; he says, “[She helped a lot. She is invested in me and helped me get back on track with my life. I don’t think I could have found this job on my own.”

LaPierre’s is a busy store. Several customers visited during our interview. “We really like Josh. He has learned new skills over the last year. We wish we could hire him full-time.” Currently, Ciampi is working part-time. He likes the owners, too. “They are nice people. I like the work there. The best part is going to the job locations to help with installing flooring. I have learned a lot.”

It has been a full year since Ciampi has joined LaPierre’s staff. He arrives early in the morning every day and cuts carpets, prepares machines, and helps with miscellaneous tasks including greeting customers, which was something he could not do earlier. “He’s the ideal employee. He is not different than any other employee.” Davis’ advice to other employers: “Give yourself a chance to understand the person’s *abilities*. It may take a few failures at first, but eventually you do figure it out and it is worth it.”

For Ciampi, part-time work was not enough. With his employment counselor’s help he eventually found a second job at Sears doing strictly warehouse work that comes with detailed instructions. The work is physical and repetitive, which works well for him. Ciampi tells me that he works about 45 hours between the two jobs each week. He appears less nervous now. “My employers seem to like my work and tell me I am doing a good job. They ask me to help on weekends sometimes and that’s okay with me. My goal is to get my own car so I need to save money. Eventually, I would like to have my own apartment, too.”

Employment helped turned Ciampi's life around. Often people think working is mostly about the need for money. When I ask the reasons Ciampi likes to work, he shares that he enjoys the money, but he really enjoys his co-workers too. And it goes beyond that. "Work takes my mind off things. It allows me to be more focused. I feel a lot better when I am working – it benefits me a great deal."

"Having work is very important," according to Ciampi. He's not alone in his thinking. More than half the people receiving services at a mental health center report wanting to work. People know that working makes life better. With the help of a dedicated employment counselor like Philip, who offers evidence-based supported employment services, people can obtain meaningful employment.

LEGISLATIVE & REGULATORY

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)**

Lawmakers addressed concerns about the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) on later health and behavioral outcomes by including language in two bills during the first half of the 2015-2016 legislative biennium.

- Act No. 54 (S.139) Lawmakers directed the Blueprint for Health to use an unspecified portion of the funds appropriated for the Blueprint to "work collaboratively to begin including family-centered approaches and adverse childhood experience screenings consistent with the report entitled "Integrating ACE-Informed Practice into the Blueprint for Health." Lawmakers further directed the Blueprint for Health to consider "prevention, early identification, and screening, as well as reducing the impact of adverse childhood experiences through trauma-informed treatment and suicide prevention initiatives."
- Act No. 60 (S.9) The child protection reform bill requires the Secretary of Human Services to "identify and utilize evidence-informed models of serving families that prioritize child safety and prevention of child abuse and neglect through early interventions with high risk families that develop family strengths and reduce the impact of adverse childhood experiences." The Secretary also is directed to make recommendations in the FY2017 budget regarding the models used. The legislation charges the Department for Children and Families with implementing the child protection reform bill and Blueprint for Health requirements. DMH Director of Mental Health and Healthcare Integration, Kathy Hentcy, will work toward these goals on a DCF work group.

To learn more about the effects of trauma on children, the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, child trauma services in Vermont, and the AHS trauma policy, use this link to the DMH website. <http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/topics/trauma>

- **CON Implementation Report for Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH)**
The Department of Mental Health submitted a quarterly CON report for VPCH this month that provided clinical, programmatic, operational, and technology updates to the Green Mountain Care Board. It includes the required spreadsheet of expenditures for the first quarter of 2015 and expenditures to date for development of the hospital. Once a fully integrated electronic health record is implemented and operationalized, the CON reporting requirements will be satisfied. The CON report is posted on the DMH website: http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/dmh/files/Facilities/VPCH/CON_VPCH_Docket_12-028-H_61715.pdf

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- **Vermont Psychiatric Survivors**
The Advisory received notice from VPS, announcing the selection of a new Executive Director for the organization.

Vermont Psychiatric Survivors is excited to announce the hiring of a new Executive Director. Wilda White, who comes from San Francisco, will begin work at VPS in mid-July. Wilda is a lawyer by training, with a law degree from Berkeley Law School and a business degree from Harvard. She has a life-long commitment to social justice and civil rights, along with strong business credentials. Her most recent job was as Executive Director of the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice at the Berkeley Law School.

Wilda became interested in Vermont Psychiatric Survivors while researching information about her own mental health challenges. She is interested in strengthening the advocacy and educational mission of VPS and in growing the membership. Wilda is not new to Vermont. She received her undergraduate degree in Latin American studies from the University of Vermont.

VPS also announces that they have moved into new offices at 128 Merchants Row in downtown Rutland. With a new Executive Director and new offices, they are looking forward to a fresh start this summer.

REDUCING TOBACCO USE IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

- **Opportunities for Behavioral Health Providers and Facilities**
Webinar Series: Dr. Chad Morris
Dr. Chad Morris, a national expert in tobacco cessation treatment for substance abuse and mental health clients, will be presenting a series of four webinars for behavioral health facilities and providers. The first webinar, Implementation Updates and Technical Assistance for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Facilities, will be on July 16th, 2015

from 12:00 – 1:00 pm. For more information, please contact Sarah Wylie at Sarah.Wylie@state.vt.us, or register [here](#).

Becoming a Tobacco Treatment Specialist

Treatment of tobacco dependence in the mental health population is a challenge that Vermont's behavioral health treatment providers are well positioned to address since motivational interviewing (MI) is the cornerstone of tobacco treatment, and many providers already use MI with their clients.

Vermont providers are enhancing their tobacco treatment skill set by becoming trained as Tobacco Treatment Specialists through the nationally accredited program offered by the University of Massachusetts (UMass). The Vermont Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program (VTCP) is making the UMass training available tuition-free to Vermont substance abuse and mental health treatment providers, a training that would otherwise cost a provider \$1,000 to attend. VTCP is also paying the tuition for the prerequisite, the online course, "**Basic Skills for Working with Smokers**," making a promo code available so that the VTCP is billed and the registrant is not charged. The next four-day **Tobacco Treatment Specialist training** will be offered at the **Vermont Department of Health in Burlington on September 17-18 & September 24-25, 2015**. The course topics include determinants of tobacco dependence, pharmacotherapy, motivational interviewing, and tobacco treatment planning and strategies. For more information and registration, please contact Clare Lafrance at clare.lafrance@partner.state.vt.us.

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Dr. Ernest Lapierre** joined the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital team this month as Nurse Educator. VPCH staff may recognize Ernie because this spring he has been the faculty person assisting Norwich University nursing students with their rotation here at the hospital. Dr. Lapierre has a range of clinical and academic experience that spans a career in adult psychiatric mental health nursing. Ernie hails from Vermont and recently returned here to teach and maintain a private practice. His beginnings in psychiatric nursing include a time working at Trenton State Hospital in NJ as psychiatric technician. He then proceeded to nursing school and practice before moving on to advanced practice work and teaching at the university level. Ernie has a Master's Degree in Adult Mental Health Nursing from Rutgers University and a PhD in Nursing Education Administration and Community Mental Health Nursing from the University of Alabama.

Ernie has had the unusual opportunity to assess his potential fit within the VPCH organization while working with Norwich students. During his interview he made clear how impressed he was with the care that patients received at VPCH and wanted very much to be a part of that. Please join us in welcoming Ernie to the hospital and DMH.

- **Jackie Yandow** accepted the position of Operations Manager for the Department of Mental Health. In Jackie's prior role, she provided indispensable management of grants

and contracts for the DMH Business Office. Along with her three years of experience with grants and contracts, Jackie brings over 20 years of business experience, including management of two small diverse businesses. The combination of her customer service skills; experience in property management, human resources, and business development; and grants and contracts is a great asset to the department in the broader, higher level role of Operations Manager.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: Evaluation of Young Vermonters Experiencing Early-Episode Psychosis DUE JULY 27, 2015

- DMH is seeking proposals from experienced research professionals or programs to design and execute a research study focused on the experience of young Vermonters and their families who have struggled with early-episode psychosis. The results of this study will support DMH's analysis of the needs of this population and help to ensure that the personal and familial experiences of this population inform the identification and adoption of appropriate evidence-based interventions and treatment approaches. More: [http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/dmh/files/Early Episode Psychosis RFP.pdf](http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/dmh/files/Early_Episode_Psychosis_RFP.pdf)