

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

During the 2016 legislative session, lawmakers will review and discuss the results of an examination by the Secretary of Human Services regarding development of a permanent psychiatric secure residential program that would replace the temporary facility in Middlesex. Following Tropical Storm Irene, it was urgent to provide a secure (locked) residential treatment program for a limited number of individuals who no longer required inpatient psychiatric care, but who still needed both treatment and a secure facility for supervision before moving to alternative community-based programs. The Department of Mental Health recently issued a Request for Information to gather initial proposals or recommendations for the siting, design, operation and/or management of a secure recovery residence. Written submissions are expected by November 2, 2015, from organizations with potential interest in the design, development and/or operation of the new facility. The examination outcome seeks to “analyze the operating costs for the facility, including the staffing, size of the facility, the quality of care supported by the structure, and the broadest options available for management and ownership of the facility” whether undertaken by the State or a non-State entity. See the RFI at this link or contact Nick.Nichols@vermont.gov or 802-828-3817 for questions.
http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/dmh/files/RFP/SRR_RFI_9-10-15.pdf

--- Frank Reed, Commissioner

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- **Working Safely in the Community**
Washington County Mental Health Services (WCMHS) and the entire Central Vermont community were deeply impacted by the recent tragedies involving the violent death of social worker Lara Sobel and three members of the Herring family. An event of this magnitude is something WCMHS does its best to prepare for and to respond in the most effective way possible. “The collegial offers of assistance from other designated agencies left WCMHS feeling incredibly humbled,” said Executive Director, Mary Moulton. “Despite the deep sadness we all feel here, we are determined to work from a place of hope, not a place of fear”.

In the immediate timeframe of this horrific incident, WCMHS responded to the scene of the event within 30 minutes, providing supports to family members, friends, and co-workers. Guidance was offered to the Agency of Human Services central office, and debriefing was organized for affected state employee groups in collaboration with the Vermont Employee Assistance Program. As an organization of community workers, WCMHS employees also were impacted; groups and divisions began to meet to grieve

and share safety concerns going forward. Throughout the following week, WCMHS offered debriefing and grief supports to internal and external groups and individuals. WCMHS Disaster Response team members also offered supports to school camps impacted by the events, court house staff, and other groups affected by the tragedy. Fortunately, another possibly dangerous event was avoided the Wednesday following the events, when an armed man was detained by police at the gas station next to WCMHS Children, Youth, and Family Services building. This caused the building to immediately be placed on lock-down, implementing protocols to ensure safety of those in the building. As a side note, one group was reviewing community safety protocols as this event was unfolding, accentuating the need to take the steps that were already in motion --- reviewing and refreshing these critical skills for all community mental health employees to possess.

Going forward, WCMHS will play an instrumental role in rolling out a training called “Working Safely in the Community”. This training was developed in-house at WCMHS by Mary Moulton and Emergency Services Coordinator, Gary Gordon. Mary and Gary spent many years working with the State to improve behavioral health emergency / disaster responses; they adopted this training from The State of New Jersey protocols developed in the wake of 9/11. These protocols include safety awareness measures to be utilized from office layout to home visits to self-care training. WCMHS will join upcoming planning meetings with many area providers, including law enforcement, the Family Center of Washington County, Washington County Youth Service Bureau, the Department for Children and Families, the faith-based community, and school systems to develop a plan of pro-active community support and community worker training needs in the face of this tragedy.

- **Peer-to-peer Employment Services**

For the past three years, Another Way in Montpelier and The Wellness Co-op in Burlington have provided peer-to-peer employment services to young adults and others interested in securing meaningful employment. Vermont is at the forefront in its creation of a comprehensive array of peer-to-peer employment services that go far beyond a pre-vocational focus and instead are grounded in the belief that everyone who wants to work can work and will be fully supported in their efforts.

The programs’ employment specialists were trained in Dartmouth’s Individual Placement and Support model of Supported Employment (IPS/SE) in addition to Intentional Peer Support, the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) and other topics. They have been actively collaborating with others in the employment field, such as Voc Rehab, Creative Workforce Solutions, VABIR, the designated agencies and other employment specialists.

Over the course of fiscal years 2012 through 2015, our two employment specialists together achieved the following impressive outcomes:

- ✓ 176 individuals accessed our employment services
- ✓ 83 individuals worked at some point during the three-year period
- ✓ 47% employment rate was achieved

- ✓ 9 individuals enrolled in education programs
- ✓ 38 individuals enrolled or re-enrolled with Voc Rehab

What is Unique about Our Services?

- ✓ By identifying as peers, our employment specialists are able to uniquely connect with employment seekers. Sharing their own lived experiences fosters a sense of comfort, trust, and openness that often leads to close working relationships. The combination of IPS/SE with Intentional Peer Support creates a unique and enhanced focus on person-centered support. We believe everyone has strengths as well as the ability to work.
- ✓ Adoption of the IPS/SE model fits our peer-based community programs, a modification from its typical inclusion at community mental health centers.
- ✓ Employment services succeed by getting to know employment seekers on a personal level, engaging in job exploration and job development with local employers, and providing continued support once someone is employed.

The Wellness Co-op and Another Way receive funding from Vermont's Mental Health Transformation Grant for the benefit of the individuals they serve, enabling them to develop and staff the IPS model of Supported Employment. Voc Rehab was another source of initial financial support for IPS/SE services at both sites.

Contact Nick Parrish at The Wellness Co-op (1-888-492-8218) or Will Eberle at Another Way (1-802-595-2987).

DISPERSED LEVEL I SYSTEM OF CARE

- **Measures to Address Nursing Vacancies at Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital**
The national and local shortage of Registered Nurses, accentuated by an even smaller number of nurses who enter the psychiatric field, has presented recruitment and retention challenges for VPCH from its opening in July 2014. Competition from other Vermont hospitals that offer greater compensation than State of Vermont classified positions allow have exacerbated the problem. Staffing the new psychiatric hospital in Berlin required a transition from the 8-bed interim hospital in Morrisville to a 25-bed permanent hospital in Berlin. From the beginning, VPCH supplemented State-employed nurses with contracted traveling nurses, a pool that gradually declined. These factors combined with staff leaves of absence further contributed to the current shortage, which resulted in closure of one of VPCH's four patient units on July 31st. Short and long-term strategies are now being implemented through a comprehensive and collaborative planning process involving the leadership of the Agency of Human Services, the Department of Human Resources, and the Labor Management Committee of the state employees' union, VSEA, all working together with the Department of Mental Health and VPCH. New, stronger measures have been approved to incentivize the hiring and retention of Registered Nurses with financial, marketing, and referral strategies.

Two Job Fairs Specifically for Nurses

- ✓ BURLINGTON – September 18th at Vermont Department of Labor, 63 Pearl Street, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. DOL is across Pearl Street from the Social Security office. An expedited hiring process will be in place, such as conditional offers of employment at VPCH for qualified applicants.
- ✓ BERLIN – September 25th at Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital, Fisher Road, Berlin. Please call 802-828-2550 for time.

Read more about VPCH at <http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/Facilities%5CBerlin>

While striving to increase the number of RN's employed by the State, traveling nurses to supplement our own nursing staff will continue under new contracts that will bring nurses to the hospital's units at the beginning of October. Still, it may take up to six months to reach the full 25-bed capacity with all four units operating at VPCH. See the August 28th overview report on nursing personnel to legislative committees on the DMH website at this link:

http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/dmh/files/report/legislative/VPCH_Status_Report_8-28-15.pdf

PROMOTING HEALTH, WELLNESS & RECOVERY

- **Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, Vermont**, is the beautiful site of the Department of Mental Health's 2015 Adult Mental Health Conference on **October 6th from 9:15 to 4:30**
Register online at <http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/node/1664>

All are welcome to the Department of Mental Health's conference, most especially peers, family members, hospital and community mental health providers, law enforcement, advocates, and interested stakeholders, on promoting the health, wellness and recovery of individuals who receive support from Vermont's adult mental health system.

Registration deadline is Friday, September 18th. Contact Jennifer.Rowell@vermont.gov or at 802-828-1702.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- **NAMIWalk for Mental Health** <http://namivt.org/>
Historic Battery Park overlooking Lake Champlain will again be the gathering place, beginning at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, October 3rd, for NAMI Vermont's 5k Walk in Burlington's downtown. Speakers begin at 10:00 and the Walk gets underway by 10:30. Walkers will stroll up and down the Church Street Marketplace, enjoy the vista of the lake along Battery Street, walk through the Hill Section, and come down Pearl Street to Battery Park. Along the way, walkers will proudly stand up for mental health, create

awareness among throngs of Burlington area residents, students, and fall foliage visitors, and help NAMI Vermont to meet its fundraising goals. NAMIWalk is an event for all who support the hope of recovery, mental health parity, and community services for individuals and families who all have stories to tell about how mental illness has affected their lives. There is no registration fee and you can also WiFi Walk from home. To sign up, go to www.namiwalks.org/vermont or contact Jana Beagley at NAMI jbeagley@namivt.org or (802) 876-7949 x 103.