

# ***Touchstones:*** **Creating Community & Change in Collaboration**

Vermont Forensic  
Care Working Group  
*July 15, 2021*

*(A) any gaps in the current mental health and criminal justice system structure related to individuals incompetent to stand trial or who are adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity;*

*(B) opportunities to: (i) improve public safety and address the treatment needs for individuals incompetent to stand trial or who are adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity; and (ii) consider the importance of victims' rights in the forensic care process;*

*(C) competency restoration models used in other states, including both models that do not rely on involuntary medication to restore competency and how cases where competency is not restored are addressed; (D) models used in other states to determine public safety risks and the means used to address such risks, including guilty but mentally ill verdicts in criminal cases;*

*(E) due process requirements for defendants held without adjudication of a crime and presumed innocent;*

*(F) processes regarding other mental conditions affecting competence or sanity, including intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injury, and dementia;*

*(G) models for forensic treatment, including the size, scope, and fiscal impact of any forensic treatment facility; and*

*(H) any additional recommendations*

# Hi, I'm Alex!



**Vermont Cooperative  
for Practice Improvement  
& Innovation**

## **Alex Lehning, MA (he/him), executive director of VCPI**

Alex has helped to facilitate important & challenging conversations in nonprofits, higher education, and cultural heritage organizations for over a decade. In these roles, he shares a commitment to fostering cultures of well-being for both communities and organizations. Alex is an advocate for suicide prevention education as well as student mental health. In addition to his work at VCPI, he is also an instructor with the Community College of Vermont, community volunteer, and a historian of medicine. A trained death doula, Alex holds a BA in History from the University of Maine, a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Marlboro Graduate College, and an MA in History from the University of Vermont. He is currently completing a graduate degree in counseling from Northern Vermont University.

# Finding a Shared Framework...

- Be present as fully as possible. Speak our truth from our hearts and minds.
- Listen deeply & generously...trust that we all hold a piece of the puzzle and we need each other's pieces to understand the whole picture.
- Embrace differences & be open to learning from one other.
- When the going gets rough, turn to wonder. Shift from reaction and judgment to curiosity and compassionate inquiry.
- Honor each other's knowledge and resourcefulness. Trust that we will learn and contribute in our own way.
- Make space to pause & reflect to deepen our thinking.
- Be willing to navigate meaningful conflict to create unprecedented goals and solutions. When needed, seek support for help with conflicts.

# Finding a Shared Framework...

- Allow y/our ideas to be developed further by others.
- Seek common ground. When we can't fully agree, we commit to a unified & aligned decision and to see what happens from a position of learning with humility.
- Accept that we will sometimes miss the mark, but together will learn & move forward.
- Help each other to have the confidence to practice empathy, to be creative, and to take on new roles.
- Balance y/our yearning for change with patience for the process of change and growth.
- Make the way we work together an example of what's possible.

*Source: adapted/adopted from the Center for Courage & Renewal*

# Strategies for Community-Building

1. Center your common purpose (*roles & responsibilities*)
2. Identify & commit to a shared framework (*how will we work together?*)
3. Prioritize alignment over agreement (*consensus-building*)
4. Make equal space for exploration & engagement (*think strategically & practically*)
5. Foster creativity, equity, inclusion, and impact (*be intentional about community*)

# Tools & Resources to Consider

1. Start with your mission, always
2. Be proactive about logistics, including: accessibility, continuing the conversation beyond meetings, documentation, deep confidentiality, and providing space for self-evaluation
3. Come to a shared understanding of language, outcomes, impact, decision-making, and assessment; be sure to outline guideposts to check-in, report & re-evaluate
4. Define pathways which encourage positive collaborative models: strengths-based approaches, appreciative inquiry, active listening, etc.
5. Practice genuine community & self-care; model collective changemaking