



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Week One 2023

Eating Disorder Awareness in Youth

Eating disorders are serious, sometimes life-threatening illnesses. While they may present throughout the lifespan, eating disorders often emerge during adolescence, and can greatly impact a youth's physical and psychological development. Recent data shows troubling increases both in prevalence and severity, with the most severe cases afflicting young women and adolescents.

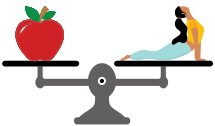
Complex in nature, eating disorders are the result of psychological, biological, nutritional, interpersonal, cultural and societal forces. As outlined by the National Eating Disorders Association, both prevention and early identification must take all of these factors into account.

Prevention

Society communicates unrealistic and harmful body ideals that are often internalized from a young age and stay with individuals throughout a lifetime. As parents, family members, and friends, we all play a part in preventing eating disorders by examining our own thinking, promoting body positivity, and confronting the pressure to conform to unrealistic appearance ideals.



Model body positivity. For parents, avoid criticizing your own shape or size, or talking as though you are constantly dieting. Openly share the things you like about yourself! Setting an example of self-acceptance rather than shame and self-criticism is essential for helping kids build self-esteem. Be sure children know they are loved unconditionally, and that it has nothing to do with their weight or appearance. Discuss how bodies come in endless shapes, sizes and colors and show appreciation for that diversity.



Encourage balanced eating and movement. Promote eating a variety of foods in moderation, and avoid using food as a reward or punishment. Trust children's appetites and do not seek to limit caloric intake unless requested to do so by a physician for a medical problem. Encourage regular physical activity for overall wellness, not for weight loss or maintenance.



Create an atmosphere where children and youth feel heard and safe discussing vulnerable topics. Resisting societal pressures takes a great deal of strength and insight. Young people should be applauded for sharing their complicated feelings and experiences, and for asserting themselves in the face of pressure to conform.



Support critical thinking. Pay attention to and openly challenge the harmful body image messages sent by the media. Help children to identify what is superficial in nature, and to equate self-worth with what really matters: character, individuality, care for others, confidence, fulfillment, ability to form strong relationships, etc.

Warning Signs

When eating disorders begin to take hold, early identification is key for reducing long-term physical and mental health effects, and embarking on the path to healing. The main warning signs for parents, educators, and primary care providers to look for in a youth involve a *change from baseline*. In addition to body weight changes, some examples include:

- Change in eating habits, or attitudes and behaviors towards food
- Withdrawal from social activities, particularly those involving food
- New food rituals, such as cutting food into very small pieces or chewing food excessively
- Spending excessive time in the bathroom immediately after eating, which may indicate purging
- Negative self-perception as it relates weight or size
- Compulsive or excessive exercising
- Adoption of a highly restricted and regimented diet, sometimes overly focused on “clean eating” or cutting out entire food groups
- Changes in personality, including mood swings, irritability, anxiety or depression
- Disruption to the gastrointestinal system, such as constipation or acid reflux

When complimenting kids, focus on their efforts and inner qualities, rather than their appearance. Here are a few compliment ideas that celebrate who kids are and not how they look.

- “You worked so hard on that! I like how you didn’t give up.”
- “You’re a very thoughtful friend.”
- “What a good idea! How did you think of that?”
- “I admire your confidence.”
- “I am proud of you. I hope you are proud of yourself too!”

Many other prevention ideas and warning signs exist, and more details can be found at the links below.

[National Eating Disorder Association \(NEDA\)](#)

[Multi-service Eating Disorders Association \(MEDA\)](#)

[National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders \(NCEED\)](#)

Fortunately, full recovery from eating disorders is possible! ***If you have concerns about yourself or a loved one, please do not suffer in silence. Speak with that individual, or seek professional guidance.*** Primary care providers are a great place to begin, particularly for children and youth, as pediatricians closely track growth and nutrition over time.

Given the limited access to treatment in Vermont, a recent legislative work group convened to make extensive recommendations around what changes are needed to truly meet our community’s need. For more details about eating disorder prevention and treatment, as well as the full list of recommendations: [Eating_Disorder_Report_Act_114_Section_13.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#)

Vermont Abenaki Recognition and Heritage Week

May celebrates Vermont’s official recognition of the indigenous people of this land and acknowledges the strength of their heritage. This is an ideal time to look at how we work with our indigenous youth and acknowledge the importance of their culture to their wellness. It is also critical to ensure that our current and future programs, resources, and policies do no harm. Sometimes well-meaning initiatives end up having the opposite effect due to lack of understanding around the community’s culture.

A good example is the Vermont Tobacco 21 law which has no spiritual exemptions, so indigenous youth are restricted from using ceremonial tobacco. Tobacco has always been sacred to the Abenaki but now youth and their parents are being told that their spirituality is wrong and illegal. This type of policy affects a child’s sense of belonging and connection to their community which can lead to any number of mental health challenges.



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2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- **33%** of AI/AN (American Indian and Alaska Natives) middle school students reported feeling sad or hopeless for 2 weeks or more in the past year, significantly higher than Vermont students overall (23%).
- **18%** of AI/AN middle school students have ever made a suicide plan, significantly higher than Vermont students overall (12%).
- **12%** of AI/AN middle school students have ever attempted suicide, significantly higher than Vermont students overall (6%).

Here are some actions we can all take to make a positive impact for our Indigenous youth in Vermont:

1. Make sure your programs and resources are culturally sensitive/inclusive.
2. Encourage cultural competency trainings specific to the indigenous community you are working with.
3. Make sure your committees, advisory panels and commission include indigenous voice.
4. Include the indigenous community in your grants so that new community-based resources can be created.
5. Hire a cultural liaison.

Perinatal Mood & Anxiety Disorders (PMADs)

Expecting and caring for a baby is an exciting, life-changing time. It can also be really challenging. Perinatal Mood & Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) can occur any time during pregnancy or the first year after childbirth, making it the leading complication of childbearing. Both common & treatable, new data indicates that as many as 1 in 4 pregnant or postpartum Vermonters suffer from symptoms of depression and/or anxiety during the perinatal period (Vermont PRAMS, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System). There is evidence that fathers, partners, foster/adoptive parents, & other caregivers are similarly at risk from the stress of welcoming a baby.

It's not just postpartum and it's not just depression; there is a wide spectrum of emotional distress that can present with PMADs. Symptoms include feeling overwhelmed, irritable, weepy, empty, loss of interest, exhausted but unable to sleep, having scary or unwanted thoughts, or just not feeling like yourself. Left untreated, PMADs can have a profound and lasting impact on entire families. Universal screening for PMADs is a critical step in identifying individuals in need of treatment. Discussing these concerns with your doctor, nurse, midwife, and/or family can help you get started with getting effective support for you, your baby, and your family.

In 2018, Vermont was awarded a 5-year cooperative agreement by HRSA to address perinatal mental health. The Screening, Treatment & Access to Mothers & Perinatal Partners (STAMPP) program was developed to improve the mental health and well-being of pregnant and postpartum people, their children and families, by developing and sustaining a coordinated system of mental health supports.

With this federal funding, STAMPP has helped to create a communications campaign, Support Delivered, to raise awareness around the prevalence of PMADs and bridge connections between expecting and new parents and statewide perinatal mental health resources. Additionally, pilot projects in the designated mental health agencies have extended to all regions of Vermont with programming such as: increased access to doula supports embedded at a community mental health center, expanded support for home-visiting perinatal mental health clinicians and postpartum doula care in rural regions, parent support groups to reduce isolation and promote social connectedness, as well as continued training and capacity-building of providers to screen and treat PMADs.



You are not alone. There are professionals and programs to help.

If you or a loved one are feeling anxious, depressed, or stressed, speak with your healthcare provider and visit SupportDeliveredVT.com to access Vermont-based resources.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

It Takes A Team...

Vermont has many efforts to prevent suicide and continues to expand programs and initiatives to reach more people. The Vermont Department of Mental Health has been and continues to collaborate with various state agencies such as the Department of Health (VDH) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), community organizations, and various partners statewide to ensure suicide prevention initiatives are implemented effectively. Each organization brings a unique perspective to preventing suicide. As you read on, you will notice it is a team effort to make healing and recovery possible.

Taking A Moment To Pause



Now that you've accessed this newsletter, you can either read on, participate in a self-care activity, or revisit this another time. Go at your own pace, without hesitation. For those looking to pause and participate in an activity various ideas can be found [here](#). What is important about self-care is that today's activity might look differently than the previous one, and that's okay. This is for you.

Let's Catch Up

988 is the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline offering 24/7 access to trained crisis counselors who can help people experiencing mental health-related distress, thoughts of suicide, mental health or substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress. People can call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org for themselves or if they are worried about a loved one who may need crisis support. Since July 2022, 988 has served as a universal entry point so that no matter where you live in the United States, you can reach a trained crisis counselor who can help. Following the July launch, 80-90% of all calls from Vermonters are answered in Vermont.



Governor's Challenge

Vermont has entered into a formal commitment to address suicide prevention for veterans, service members and their families through a national initiative called the Governor's Challenge. A team of state leaders, service members, VA leaders, family members and other human and healthcare service partners have joined together to implement the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide in Vermont](#).

In 2021, Vermont lost 142 individuals to suicide. Of those lost, 20% were identified as having served in the U.S. Armed Forces. This data illustrates an increased risk of suicide for those who have served and the crucial need to provide more timely supports that are responsive to their needs.



The Governor's Challenge team is working to identify their top priorities, the best strategies for their community's needs, and the efforts they will use to evaluate Vermont's outcomes.

Center for Disease Control Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Grant



With grants such as the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Comprehensive Suicide Prevention grant, VDH has been able complete various initiatives. One initiative is a public health campaign and website called facing-suicidevt.com. Visitors to the website will find ways to get help, give help, listen to compelling real stories from Vermonters, and find resources listed by topic. The grant has been instrumental to creating [new data products](#) as well. DMH co-manages this grant strengthening the partnership and efforts with VDH.

Garrett Lee Smith Grant

Another grant is the Garrett Lee Smith from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMSHA). This grant's objective is to reduce suicide deaths and attempts among Vermont youth ages 10-24. With programs across multiple settings, such as schools youth programs (afterschool), child welfare and juvenile justice, mental health and healthcare it is wide ranging while focusing on promoting mental health and wellness. In addition, this grant will improve supports available to families.



Events To Be On The Lookout For

CHL Symposium

The Center for Health and Learning (CHL) will be hosting the annual Vermont Suicide Prevention Symposium virtually on September 27th. CHL describes this learning opportunity; "The annual event brings together national, regional, and local Vermont stakeholders to facilitate collaborations and strengthen suicide prevention and awareness. This year, plans include a track for hospital staff involved with suicide prevention, as hospital emergency departments are often at the center of these efforts. CHL also will work with partners across the state to ensure our efforts capture both local & grassroots efforts all the way to national best-practices to guide the work that is evolving quickly here in Vermont."



VA Symposium

The Department of Veteran Affairs in White River Junction will be hosting a symposium titled, [Suicide Prevention is Everyone's Business](#) on September 8, 2023 geared towards community providers. They describe the event; "This half-day CEU event will familiarize attendees with services offered within VA, share research and evidence-based suicide prevention practices, and offer learning from a Veteran's perspective. The goal of VAWRJHCS is to continue integrating with the community, to connect and share with agencies and providers, and to be considered as a valuable resource in Vermont healthcare."





MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Mental Wellness in a Post-Pandemic World

Living in the post-pandemic world can at times feel overwhelming. Rates of anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders have all increased since the onset of the pandemic. Negative mental health and substance use outcomes have disproportionately affected some populations, particularly communities of color and youth.

How to Strengthen Your Mental Wellness and Resiliency

There are many ways to support mental wellness, and you are likely already doing a lot to support good mental health for you and your family, e.g. taking care of your physical wellness, working to reduce stress in your life, and nurturing your relationship with friends and family.

Your surroundings also contribute in significant ways to your mental health. Where you live, work, play and gather can contribute to a sense of safety and wellbeing. Research shows that environments can increase or reduce our stress. What you are seeing, hearing, experiencing at any moment is changing not only your mood, but how your nervous, endocrine, and immune systems are working. The stress of an unpleasant environment can cause you to feel anxious, sad, or helpless. A pleasant environment helps to reverse that.

You can take steps to change your space and create a nurturing, safe, and positive environment.

Your home. Having a safe, stable, and healthy home conditions set the foundation for achieving and maintaining good mental health.

As Spring slowly emerges in Vermont, and before those who are non-winter sport enthusiasts get outdoors more, we can start “spring cleaning” our indoor spaces. In addition to the usual de-cluttering, you may consider looking into feng shui, the Chinese practice of arranging living spaces to create balance with the natural world. The words “feng,” meaning wind, and “shui,” meaning water comes from an ancient poem that talks about human life being connected to and flowing with the environment around it. <https://www.thespruce.com/what-is-feng-shui-1275060>

Wherever you call ‘home’, it should give you feelings of comfort, support and calmness. Aim to create a cozy, happy indoor space.

Hygge (pronounced: hyoo-guh) is a Danish and Norwegian word that describes a mood of coziness, comfort and wellbeing. It is about taking time to relax and enjoy life's quieter pleasures, often with family or close friends, in a cozy and informal setting. Hygge is a lifestyle concept that emphasizes enjoying the good things within one's control. The word hygge dates back to around 1800, but similar definitions can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Hygge is a core part of Danish culture and is associated with feelings of wellness and contentment.

The outdoors: nature heals, soothes, and restores.

Spending time in nature is linked to many positive mental health outcomes. Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, reduces anger, fear, and stress, and increases pleasant feelings. In one study, 95% of participants said their mood improved after spending time outside, changing from depressed, stressed, and anxious to more calm and balanced.

Access to outdoor spaces varies depending on where you live, your mobility, etc. Being around nature doesn't have to mean hiking in a forest. It can be walking in a park or sitting in your backyard. Research has shown that even a simple plant in a room can have a significant impact on stress and anxiety.

Consider working in a garden. Avid gardeners will tell you that the garden is their 'happy space' and the physical act of gardening is a stress reducer and mood lifter. And did you know that soil contains antidepressant microbes? The bacterium is found in soil and may stimulate serotonin production, which makes you relaxed and happier. Read more at Gardening Know How: Antidepressant Microbes In Soil: How Dirt Makes You Happy <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/soil-fertilizers/antidepressant-microbes-soil.htm>

The Japanese practice of 'forest bathing' is a research-based practice for supporting healing and wellness through immersion in forests and other natural environments.

If you've ever been in a forest, listened to the birds and watched the sunshine filtering through the leaves, you've already participated in one of the best things you can do for your physical and mental well-being. Japanese doctors promote forest bathing as a relaxing break from hectic urban life.

Studies have shown a wide array of health benefits including stabilizing and improving mood and cognitions.

For more information, go to <https://natureconnectionguide.com/>



Forest bathing makes you happier

Your community. A strong sense of community protects mental health through shared supports, resources, and joy. While many community changes can be out of your control, being an advocate for change and making healthy community connections can bring hope.

What can you do?

- Get to know your community and neighbors and support each other.
- Connect with a group in your area where community members share and exchange services. For example, Front Porch Forum is a free community-building service in Vermont and parts of New York. Your local forum is only open to the people who live there. It's all about helping neighbors connect. <https://frontporchforum.com>
- Consider serving on a school board or attend town meetings.

Get help when you need it.

Please seek help if needed. No matter what you are going through, you're not alone. Don't feel like you have to be strong and push through your issues on your own.

As well as reaching out to mental health professionals, consider talking with a trusted friend or relative. Reach out to your religious leader, if you have one. Look for a mental health support group that meets in your area or online. Use a mental health app for free or low-cost guidance and tools (e.g. Healthy Minds).

Here is a short guide from the National Institute of Mental Health describing symptoms that indicate that you ought to seek professional help.

My Mental Health: Do I Need Help?

First, determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life.



Do I have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than 2 weeks?

- Feeling a little down
- Feeling down, but still able to do job, schoolwork, or housework
- Some trouble sleeping
- Feeling down, but still able to take care of yourself or take care of others



If so, here are some self-care activities that can help:

- Exercising (e.g., aerobics, yoga)
- Engaging in social contact (virtual or in person)
- Getting adequate sleep on a regular schedule
- Eating healthy
- Talking to a trusted friend or family member
- Practicing meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness

If the symptoms above do not improve or seem to be worsening despite self-care efforts, talk to your health care provider.



Do I have severe symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Unable to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities
- Thoughts of death or self-harm



Seek professional help:

- Psychotherapy (talk therapy)—virtual or in person; individual, group, or family
- Medications
- Brain stimulation therapies
- You can also talk to your primary care doctor or another health professional about your mental health problems and ask them to connect you with the right services.

If you are in crisis or thinking of harming yourself, you should seek immediate help. Call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org, or text the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 741741).

Your local community mental health center has a 24/7 support and crisis line. Click on this link to find the center closest to you. <https://vermontcarepartners.org/intake-and-crisis-lines/>



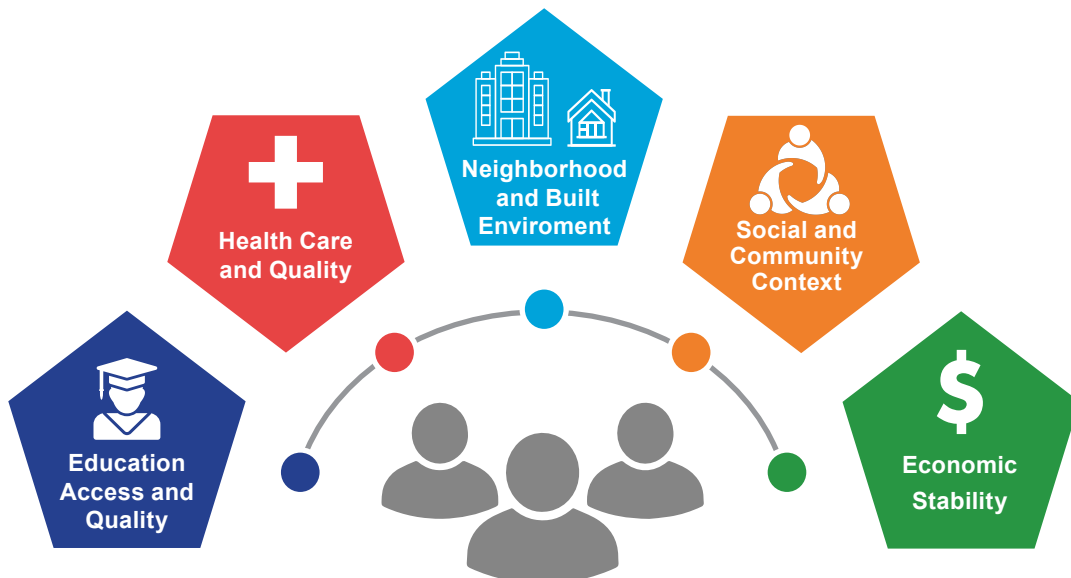
MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Week Four 2023

Department of Mental Health Community Investments: Focus on Equity and Recovery from Pandemic Challenges

The Department is currently supporting a broad range of community investments intended to strengthen community resilience, health equity, and improve social and political determinants of health across the state.

What are the Social Determinants of Health?	What is Health Equity?
<p>The CDC describes this as, “The conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.” Having access to housing, food, and employment are all protective factors that may determine the ability for an individual to experience wellness.</p>	<p>Health equity is achieved when every person has the ability to reach their full potential for optimal health and wellness, and when individuals aren't hindered from achieving this potential due to social, political or environmental circumstances.</p>



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Community Resilience Programming:

Abenaki Cultural Training and Mental Health Supports to Abenaki Bands in VT:

The Department is aware of the many strengths, as well as historical and intergenerational trauma, that impact overall wellness for the Abenaki people. Lack of cultural awareness, data, and engagement challenges also impact our system of care's ability to support this population.

To that end, the Department recently provided multiple endeavors specific to the Abenaki community:

A Working Toward Understanding Lunch and Learn for Agency of Humans Services staff

Indigenous Historical and Intergenerational Trauma presentations were delivered to both State of Vermont staff and community partners in healthcare fields

In addition, each of the four Abenaki tribes and two Abenaki non-profits in VT will each be provided \$13,000 in funding to help them address historical and intergenerational trauma in their communities.

Total awarded: \$106,000 to Vermont Care Partners



Language Access Videos

The Department funded a project to create videos about mental health developed in 15 most used languages for refugees and immigrant populations across the state, including in American Sign Language.

Total awarded: \$50,000 to the Vermont Language Justice Project

Cultural Liaisons:

The Department is currently funding Cultural Liaison positions the Howard Center, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and the Association of Africans Living in Vermont. Liaisons work to reduce cultural barriers for members of the refugee, immigrant, and resettled community in need of services for mental health, substance use disorders and/or intellectual disabilities, working across home, community, school, and office settings. This position provides outreach, support, and service coordination to address needs associated with wellness and resettlement.

Total awarded: \$801,000 (\$267,000 per agency)

Early Childhood Mental Health

The Department funds a variety of activities supporting early childhood mental health which include activities to treat children and youth with Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED). This funding is provided to Building Bright Futures, an organization working to promote mental health resources and develop partnerships within regional early childhood providers that support children with SED in order to improve emergency response and to increase provider understanding of mental health needs for this population.

Total awarded: \$30,000



Peer Support for Parents and Caregivers

The Department provided grant funding to assist parents of children who meet the criteria for Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED) by providing those parents with peer support. This support is intended to aid in identifying and navigating support for their children at the State and community level. In addition to helping parents navigate Coordinated Service Plans(CSPs), the peer support will also assist with delivering education, identification of resources and advocacy for their assigned families.

Total awarded: \$70,000 to Vermont Family Network

Substance Use and Mental Health supports for justice involved adults:

A collaboration between the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), and Pathways Vermont works to enhance treatment for individuals involved in the criminal justice system. This assistance will come through the evidence-based Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) practice, which is recognized by the federal Substance Abuse Mental Health and Services Administration (SAMHSA) as having shown success in treating individuals with mental health and/or substance use challenges and who are considered at risk of re-offending.

FACT will help to reduce the likelihood of individuals being incarcerated again, and increase productive, safe, and structured time in the community where they will be provided resources for housing, employment, and opportunities to build social connections.

Total awarded: \$1,000,000 grant

Community Investments: Improving Provider Capacity and Workforce Development

COVID Relief Funds: Healthcare Provider Stabilization Funding :

The purpose of over \$1,700,000 in funding allocated was to stabilize the Designated and Specialized Service Agency (DA and SSA) workforce due to significant turnover exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding assisted direct services staff in the following areas:

- 24/7 Residential Direct Services Staff
- Emergency Services Clinicians
- Crisis Bed Direct Service Staff

This effort was subsequently extended to include over **\$12,050,000** in Premium Pay for Agency workforce recruitment and retention

Community Investment Housing grants:



The purpose of the total **\$4,000,000** funding is to make existing housing and community- based service facilities providing mental health services more accessible, safe, and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act or to expand capacity in community settings. Examples of the types of projects this funding currently supports includes weatherization of buildings, upgrading heating and cooling systems, and renovations to make buildings ADA compliant. The grants were awarded to organizations that demonstrate the greatest ability to respond immediately to the need for housing. Additionally, at least one grant was awarded to a peer run or peer-directed housing organization.

Wellness Supports for First Responders:

The Department provides training and wellness supports for frontline health care workers to help them meet Vermont residents' current mental health needs, such as training for emergency department personnel responding to an increased demand for crisis services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and training on trauma-informed and trauma-specific care for mental health professionals responding to the surge in mental health treatment needs.



Awarded amount: \$150,000

Emergency Outreach Grants:

The Department disseminated grants to community organizations for emergency outreach services to address COVID-19- related needs. Of these funds, the Department allocated \$150,000.00 to a mental health peer-support organization (Vermont Psychiatric Survivors) and \$150,000.00 to an organization supporting the needs of LGBTQ youth (Outright Vermont)

Total awarded: \$300,000

Case Management Services:

The Department provided funds to the designated community mental health agencies enabling them each to hire an additional case manager to provide case management services to Vermont residents who may not previously have been part of an agency's caseload but whose lives had been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and who were urgently in need of these agencies' supports.

Total awarded: \$850,000 (85k per Designated Agency)

Community Investments: Crisis System of Care

988

On July 16, 2022, Vermont, along with the rest of the nation, transitioned from the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Currently, Vermont is responding to calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is building capacity to respond to chats and texts.



The Vermont Department of Mental Health is working to create a 9-8-8 system that serves the unique needs of our residents, with the goal of providing equitable services to all Vermonters, including People of Color, Native Americans, new Americans, and the LGBTQ+ community.

While initially the work to build capacity and implement 9-8-8 was funded through grants with Vibrant, the SAMHSA designated administrator for 9-8-8, with the support of Vermont Governor, Phil Scott, the State has now allocated state funds to sustain 988 operations.

Mental Health Urgent Care

The Department is partnering with community providers to stand up Mental Health Urgent Care Centers. These programs will create an alternative space for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis to receive support services. These centers aim to divert individuals from the hospital emergency departments and limit police involvement whenever possible.

The Living Room Model: The model is designed to feel like a warm, welcoming living room where guests feel safe and not overwhelmed. The model uses multidisciplinary teams, including peer support workers to provide a safe space for those experiencing a mental health crisis. **Awardees include:** Counseling Service of Addison County (CSAC), Northeast Kingdom Human Services (NKHS) - Caledonia, Essex, Orleans Counties, and Washington County Mental Health Services (WCMH).

Psychiatric Urgent Care(PUC)/Psychiatric Urgent Care for Kids (PUCK): The model provides a space for individuals (and their family members) experiencing a mental health crisis that need an urgent response to meet with mental health clinical staff. Individuals can stay onsite for as long as they need during weekday daytime hours and even return the following days if they can be safe at home overnight. The program will offer access to peer and respite supports, safety planning, crisis de-escalation and clinical assessment. **Awardees include:** Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Vermont (HCRS) of Windsor and Windham Counties, Lamoille County Mental Health Services (LCMHS), United Counseling Services of Bennington County (UCS), and The Howard Center (HC) of Chittenden County.



Burlington CARES

Burlington CARES is a multidisciplinary mobile response team of mental health and emergency medical services. This program will be offered through a partnership with The City of Burlington and the Burlington Police Department. The CARES team will provide a therapeutic response in lieu of police intervention when someone is in crisis. The CARES team will provide trauma-informed de-escalation, screening, assessment, referrals and service coordination.

Mobile Crisis Response

The Department is implementing a new statewide Mobile Crisis Response program to Vermonters. Two-person mental health response teams will be providing 24/7 coverage across the state, meeting people in the community

who are experiencing a crisis. This program will incorporate peer support workers and harm reduction efforts for substance misuse, and seeks to divert individuals in crisis away from emergency departments and law enforcement by meeting with them in their own environment. The Department has awarded Health Care and Rehabilitation Services (HCRS), a Designated Agency, as the recipient for Community Mobile Crisis Services. HCRS will be sub-contracting with the additional nine Designated Agencies across the state to provide mobile crisis services statewide. This initiative is expected to begin its rollout by the end of 2023.

DMH is inspired by the existence of the first State Youth Council

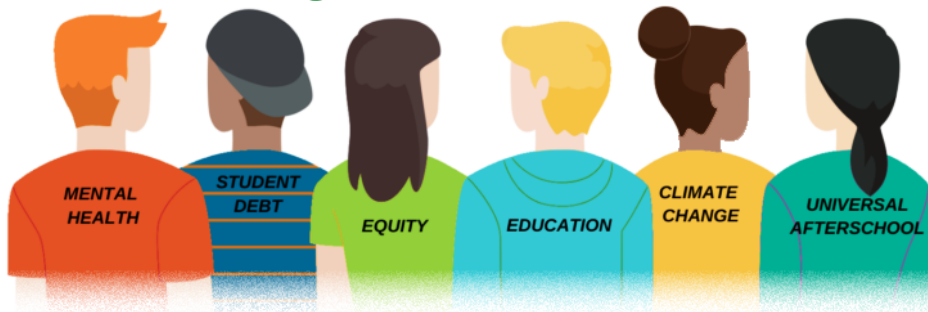
As described by Vermont Afterschool:

We believe young people make a better Vermont. They enrich our communities, they are eager to be engaged, and they have a right to be heard and respected.

It was the work of the 2020 State Youth Advisory Group that informed the writing of H.293, a Vermont State Legislature bill signed into law by Governor Scott, which established the State Youth Council—a diverse group of 28 Vermont youth from each county responsible for advising the Governor and General Assembly on the policies that impact young persons today. Vermont’s Youth Services Advisory Council selected members of the first State Youth Council in the fall of 2022 from a pool of 200 applicants. The State Youth Council held its inaugural meeting December 13, 2022, in Montpelier.

We look forward to seeing the positive impact Vermont’s State Youth Council will have on generations of Vermonters

Youth Have The Right To Be Heard And Respected



to come!

For more information please visit: <https://vermontafterschool.org/youthcouncil/>