

UCS UNITED COUNSELING SERVICE

Annual Report 2018-2019
Building a stronger community

Our Mission:

Building a stronger community

by empowering individuals and families to live healthy and meaningful lives.



Access to comprehensive mental health services can improve lives and strengthen communities, and we at UCS are dedicated to doing just that for the individuals and families we serve. We know that the need for mental health and substance abuse treatment is on the rise. UCS is dedicated to providing high-quality mental health and substance abuse treatment to meet the growing need. We know that the increased demand for service is due, in part, because people know that treatment works, and recovery is possible.

Charles Ingoglia, president and CEO of The National Council for Behavioral Health stated at Hill Day 2019 in Washington DC that, “The lack of access to timely, high quality treatment has replaced stigma as the largest barrier to those in need of mental health and addiction treatment services.” We couldn’t agree more.

United Counseling Service is committed to continuous quality improvement to better meet the needs of our community. This year has been transformational as we set out to improve many of our processes with the goal of increasing access to care, reducing wait times for individuals seeking our services, and working with community partners to engage and educate.

As a certified Center of Excellence, UCS is an essential part of Bennington County’s integrated healthcare system. We provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place, with the right provider. We are known as a great place to work and a great place to get care. We are here for you 24/7/365.

Thank you to our dedicated staff, our community partners, and our clients, for helping us build a stronger community.

—Lorna Mattern, Executive Director



Dear Friends of UCS,

2019 has been a year of driven change at UCS. In addition to an agency-wide access initiative, we have instituted payment reform mandated by the State of Vermont as well as Center of Excellence standards. We are confident that these endeavors will be beneficial in both the near and long term.

As we adapt to the changes, we continue to work hard to ensure those in need have timely access to the services they require, an ongoing industry challenge. This year, United

Counseling Service implemented ambitious process changes to help achieve our overall access-to-care goal.

Change is important but not always easy. The Board extends its sincere thank-you to the entire UCS staff and management team for embracing the *transformational*

change process our organization has undertaken, and equal gratitude to all of our individual and organizational partners. Together we are building a stronger community.

—Robert W. Thompson,
President of the Board

Access
ac•cess /'æk-,ses/
noun
freedom or ability to
obtain or make use
of something

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors oversees the operations of the community mental health and developmental services for Bennington County.

Robert Thompson, *President*
Charles Letourneau, *Vice President*
Nathaniel Marcoux, *Treasurer*
William Baldwin, *Secretary*
Joseph O’Dea, *Counsel to the Board*
David Ballou
Kristi Cross
Joanna Mintzer
Lee Romano
Forest Weyen



UCS Board, L to R: Nathaniel Marcoux, Charles Letourneau, David Ballou, Joanna Mintzer, Forest Weyen, Kristi Cross, William Baldwin, Robert Thompson, Joseph O’Dea, Lee Romano



UCS Board of Directors and Senior Leadership Team meet regularly to discuss best ways to improve community access to care and services.

Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership team is comprised of talented individuals who are dedicated to community improvement and passionate about the work they do.

Lorna Mattern, *Executive Director*
Leslie Addison, *Human Resources*
Dawn Danner, *Developmental Services*
Paul DiIunno, *Outpatient and Substance Abuse*
Jill Doyle, *Finance*
Amy Fela, *Operations*
Heidi French, *Community Relations and Development*
John “JD” Hebert, *Facilities and Safety*
Michele LaRoche, *Executive Assistant*
Julie Pagliccia, *Youth and Family Services, Northshire Services*
Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, *Early Childhood Services*
Alya Reeve, MD, *Medical Director, Emergency Services*

Kristi Cross joined the UCS Board

We were pleased to welcome Kristi Cross to the United Counseling Service Board this year.



Kristi is the Director of Bennington Blueprint for Health at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center. The Blueprint for Health program is a statewide initiative that designs community-led strategies for improving the wellbeing of those effected by chronic illness in a primary care setting. Kristi is a native of Bennington who obtained her doctorate degree in nursing with a focus on rural population health. She was recently named a Vermont Rising Star by *Vermont Business* magazine.

Kristi commented on her new board position, “I have a deep commitment to this community, and I am very much looking forward to serving as a Board member of United Counseling Service. Addressing the challenges involved in the growing mental health needs in our community is something I feel strongly about. I want to make sure that individuals and families are getting the best mental health care possible. UCS is very important to the health and welfare of this community.”

19.1%

of U.S. adults experienced
mental illness in 2018.

Partnering with clients increases access

We have found that when clients and family members are involved in the development of programs and oversight, the quality of their experience with UCS services is improved.

The **Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) Advisory Board** is an eight-member committee that meets monthly to advocate for its programs and clients. The Advisory Board provides valuable feedback about programs, and reviews and recommends policies that pertain to or influence services. The Advisory Board can include individuals receiving services, family, community, UCS board members, and agency staff.

Barbara Baker
Nancy Balconis
Greg Burda
Annette Denio
Carolyn Gauthier
Andrea Kolb
Joanna Mintzer, *UCS Board representative*
Heather Tullar

DS Advisory Board: Oversight improves access

David Ballou,
Chair
Celine Blair
Lisa Gare
Nancy Niles
Joan Reilly
Eric Webster
Ruth Wescott



David Ballou, UCS Board Member and DS Advisory Council Chair, enjoying the annual Recognition Luncheon, where staff and community members are acknowledged.

The **Developmental Services (DS) Division's Advisory Board** is a seven-person committee charged with a variety of responsibilities to ensure that UCS is providing quality services to consumers in our DS division. Committee members are involved in hiring and yearly evaluations of the Division Director. They review and evaluate division programs and recommend strategies for improving program quality and efficiency, and review outcome and management reports.

Committee members are involved in the development of the **Local System of Care Plan** and assist in surveying community members to provide feedback. When applicable, they may review and recommend allocation of resources.

“While serving on the DS Advisory Board, I have worked with clients and community partners in supporting a person-centered culture,” said David Ballou, chair of the committee and a UCS Board Member. “It’s been rewarding to see the progress of clients and of UCS.”

The committee is typically the first step in reviewing matters of quality. They pass along issues and feedback to UCS’s Quality Council, to ensure our clients are getting the best possible service.

Children’s Advisory Board

William Baldwin, *UCS Board Representative*
Barbara Barber
Erin Blest
Nicole Chapman

Members of United Counseling Service's Children's Advisory Board help the agency develop and approve policies, review outcomes, respond to feedback from the community, sit on hiring panels for upper-level management and serve as a sounding board for new ideas and programs.



Camp Be A Kid provides access to a therapeutic camp environment for children receiving services in our Youth and Family division.

The Right Care

Clients receive the services they need.



Together we are stronger: Vermont Care Partners agencies provide statewide access

Vermonters have a fundamental right to live in healthy and safe communities with access to locally provided health care and support services. The Vermont Department of Mental Health designates one Designated Agency (DA) or Specialized Service Agency (SSA) in each geographic region of the state to provide the department's mental health programs for adults and children. DAs and SSAs play an integral part of Vermont's Community-Based Health Care System. There are 16 designated and specialized service agencies providing care in Vermont. United Counseling Service is the Designated Agency serving the residents of Bennington county.

Vermont Care Partners (VCP) is the statewide association of the sixteen DAs and SSAs providing mental health, substance use and intellectual and developmental disability service and supports. VCP creates effective partnerships and efficiencies to

facilitate the provision of accessible, high quality service and supports throughout the state. Working together, VCP provides a network with extensive expertise in care management.

United Counseling Service is designated as a Center of Excellence by Vermont Care Partners. This certification is granted to agencies who demonstrate high quality and accessible comprehensive services to people living with mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

As a Designated Agency for the State of Vermont and a Certified Center of Excellence, UCS provides Easy Access, World Class Customer Service, Excellent Outcomes, Comprehensive Care, and Excellent Value in our community.

32k

Network agencies support 32,000 clients statewide and touch the lives of 50,000 Vermonters each year.

2MM

2,000,000 services provided annually across the state of Vermont.

50%

The network provides half of all services and supports in homes, schools, and communities, where Vermonters work, live and play.





UCS Programs

United Counseling Service (UCS) is a private, non-profit community mental health center serving Bennington County since 1958. UCS promotes healthy lifestyles through all its programs and offers care at 16 different facilities, including two primary outpatient facilities in Bennington and Manchester. UCS provides comprehensive, community-based behavioral and developmental services for children, adults, families, and seniors.

Adult Mental Health Outpatient and Substance Abuse

We offer outpatient individual and group therapy, case management, information, and referrals for adults, children, and families.

Services include:

- Case management and care coordination
- Coordination with intensive residential treatment programs
- Coordination with psychiatric providers
- Embedded services in primary care offices
- Employee Assistance Program
- Group therapy
- Outpatient mental health therapy
- Outpatient substance use disorder services for adults and youth

1034 Individuals Supported

Children, Youth and Family Services

We provide a system of care for children and their families through an extensive array of home and community-based services.



Services include:

- Case management and care coordination
- Clinical assessment and therapy
- Early childhood mental health
- Emergency/crisis assessment support and referral
- Housing and home supports
- Adolescent support services
- School-based services

551 Individuals Served

Developmental Services

We provide quality innovative community programs for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Services include:

- Case management and care coordination
- Community supports
- Employment supports
- Integrated family services
- Residential group homes
- Shared Living Program
- Supported Independent Living Program



228 Individuals Served



Emergency Services

We provide immediate assistance to individuals in crisis 24 hours a day.

Services include:

- 24/7 mobile emergency and crisis assessment in the community
- 24/7 emergency/crisis stabilization beds
- Access to psychiatric and other therapeutic services
- Supports for individuals post discharge from a mental health hospitalization



999 Individuals Served

Community Rehabilitation and Treatment

We provide comprehensive support for individuals experiencing chronic and persistent mental illness in order to live and work in their communities.

Services include:

- Case management and care coordination
- Clinical assessment
- Community and Employment supports
- Peer services and supports
- Psychiatric support
- Representative payee supports
- Residential group home

157 Individuals Served

Early Childhood Services

Through our Head Start and Early Head Start programs we provide a variety of community and center-based learning programs for children and their families.

Services include:

- Quality childcare
- Comprehensive education program
- Educational community events
- Family support services
- Medical and dental screenings and referrals
- Summer programs and activities



212 Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers





THE RIGHT CARE



Melanie Deysenroth and Alex Tarnas-Raskin comprise the Universal Access team. This year, they received the Quality Team Award at the annual Recognition Luncheon, for their instrumental role in revising the agency intake process and improving access to services for our clients.

Universal Access: Easing the path to care

For many clients and their families, navigating the mental health care system can be daunting. United Counseling Service’s Universal Access (UA) Coordinators are the first point of contact for those seeking services, to ensure they receive the care they need. UA Coordinators are knowledgeable about each of our agency’s service divisions and programs. After a call or in-person visit with a UA Coordinator, individuals may be scheduled for a clinical intake appointment. If a service is needed that is not provided by United Counseling Service, UA Coordinators refer them to the appropriate community partner for resources that may include housing, food, and heating assistance, to name a few. Coordinating with other agencies is a critical component in getting people the care they need.

“Our Universal Access Coordinators do an excellent job helping people with accessing services,” said Amy Fela, Director of Operations at UCS. “They are also familiar with other services that are available in our community that may better meet an individual’s needs. We value our collaborative relationships and strive to improve the lives of residents in our communities.”

Having a single first point of contact helps individuals and our community partners easily reach us. It also ensures that clients are getting the right care, in the right place, at the right time, with the right provider.

86%

of Adult Outpatient clients reported that their quality of life improved as a result of receiving services from United Counseling Service.

864

Clients served in the combined Outpatient/CRT program in 2018-19.



“UCS is a very pleasant place to be. All of the staff are kind.” CRT client Danny serves lunch at a picnic on the CRT front lawn.

75.2

Average number of calls the Universal Access team receives each week.

Combining CRT and Outpatient Divisions improves access to care

This past year, two divisions at United Counseling Service were combined into one, in an effort to break down both the clinical and physical barriers that existed in outpatient mental health. Formerly, **Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT)** provided services for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, while **Outpatient and Substance Abuse Services** provided individual and group therapy, case management, information, and referrals for adults, children, and families.



Paul DiIonno

“Working together means no longer do CRT clients see ‘only’ a CRT clinician or an outpatient client see ‘only’ a mental health clinician,” says Paul DiIonno, Director of Outpatient and Mental Health Services. “Bringing both teams together has allowed us to provide case management, mental health, and substance use services seamlessly across both divisions.”

Receiving the right care helped Caroline help others.

Strength. Determination. Perseverance. These words describe Caroline Gauthier. In 1964 Caroline’s family moved from Florida to Bennington to be closer to her aging grandmother. In 1971, shortly after her graduation from Mount Anthony Union High School, her mother died by suicide, leaving Caroline bereft and traumatized.

Over the next few years, Caroline married and had three children—two daughters, and a son who died in infancy. She threw herself into being a good wife and mother to her girls, but in 1985, when she discovered her husband had been molesting their daughters, she filed for divorce. It was then that she discovered just how strong she could be: “From that point on, the girls were mine, my responsibility—and I had to step up, and I fought.”

Her daughters grew up, married, and had children of their own. At 39, Caroline, who had moved to North Carolina, was in a car accident with her daughter and son-in-law. The accident left Caroline hospitalized for two and a half months, with two broken legs, seven broken ribs, a broken shoulder and sternum, and massive contusions. “The doctors told me I would never use my legs to walk again. One thing you don’t tell me is ‘No!’” She overcame her injuries, though she still has limited mobility in one ankle.

Eventually, Caroline moved back to Bennington to live with her younger daughter and help take care of her four young grandchildren. She threw herself into the role of family caregiver while working full-time, but the years of trauma had taken their toll. Never having properly dealt with her mother’s suicide, Caroline’s mental health was suffering, and she attempted to take her own life. She spent six weeks recovering at Greylock Hospital and another three weeks at Battelle House, a Crisis Stabilization house at UCS.

At the end of her stay at Battelle, Caroline found herself an apartment and has never again been hospitalized as a result of mental health issues. “I refuse to let that happen again. I am very determined, and I want others to be able to say that...it’s important to be able to see that little light about life.” Once settled into her independent life, Caroline began working with Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT), becoming involved in peer support groups and activities. She ran a peer support group for four years, has served on the CRT Advisory Board since 2005, and currently leads the Bipolar and Depression Peer Support Group.

Life hasn’t gotten easier for Caroline, whose oldest daughter, diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, has a failing heart. She doesn’t know what will happen next, but she knows it’s out of her control. Helping others makes her feel that



Continued on page 8

THE RIGHT CARE





THE RIGHT CARE

Caroline Gauthier... continued from page 7

she is making a difference, it helps her to get through her days. Caroline is a selfless giver by nature, but she has learned to make time to care for herself. She attends weekly therapy sessions to deal with her major depressive disorder and PTSD, keeps up on her housework, and spends time with her family.

Caroline brings joy and hope to CRT. She wants to see her peers succeed, celebrate their victories with them, and be someone they can go to for help, advice or just to listen. She has overcome much in her life that would have knocked most people down, but she is determined and won't take "no" for an answer.

Putting out fires: Bill helps keep the Bennington community safe.

Bill Clark, a UCS client who was featured in last year's annual report, continues to thrive. Bill was a CRT client who made great strides with the help of UCS and his own hard work. This past year, he took a 350-hour course and passed his Class A Firefighter test. He is currently the Captain of the Eagle Hose Division of the Bennington Fire Department.



Bill hopes to get out and engage with younger people who may live with a mental health condition. He wants people to know that "...even though you may have a mental health diagnosis, it does not mean it's the end of the world. You can achieve your goals."

Bill has also set a goal for himself to ultimately become Chief of the Bennington Fire Department.

Workplace Wellness: Self-care is the right care for employees as well as clients

Amy Fela, UCS Director of Operations, Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Director of Early Childhood Services Head Start, and Andrea Malinowski, RiseVT Bennington County Program Manager, gave a presentation on the UCS Worksite Wellness Program at the New England Head Start Association Conference in Burlington, Vermont. The group shared the core strategies of the program including nutrition, physical activity, and self-care, as well as the benefits of working with community partners to expand the scope and the reach of the program.

As an agency, UCS provides a wide variety of opportunities for staff and clients to educate themselves and adopt healthy habits. Our Wellness Committee develops creative, unique, and dynamic activities and initiatives that continually evolve to meet the needs of our staff.

The UCS Wellness Committee won a Governor's Excellence in Workplace Wellness Gold Award from the Vermont Department of Health. Committee members attended the Worksite Wellness Conference held in Burlington to receive the award. The Workplace Wellness Award Program recognizes Vermont organizations that have demonstrated an established wellness strategy for promoting healthy environments and supporting the wellbeing of their employees.



The UCS Wellness Committee was awarded "Excellence in Workplace Wellness Gold."

This year's wellness initiatives included:

- Community garden
- Kindness Rock painting
- Support groups
- Container gardening
- Meetings on the Move
- UCS Superhero 5K
- Corporate Cup challenge
- On-site CSA delivery
- Vision Board workshops
- Essential oil workshops
- Self-care Day
- Wellness walks

“Senior leadership believes deeply in the importance of physical and emotional wellness for their staff, particularly as they support our clients in their own journey to wellness and recovery.”

—Lorna Mattern, Executive Director

A report by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (mentoring.org) revealed that at-risk young people who had a mentor were:

55%

more likely to enroll in college

78%

more likely to volunteer regularly

90%

are interested in becoming a mentor

130%

more likely to hold leadership positions



UCS Mentor Kasia Sosnow, shown here with her mentee, was named Mentor of the Year by MENTOR Vermont.



Mentoring changes lives

After more than 30 years' partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of America, UCS has brought our mentoring program in-house. In the past year, BBBS made changes to its operational model and agency requirements that would have put an excessive burden on our staffing and other resources. Consequently, we created Mentoring at UCS, based on established practices, so that we can continue to match young people with amazing mentors.

Mentoring not only influences the youth who are being mentored, their families, and the mentors themselves, it changes the future of the communities we serve. Mentoring matters. Research shows that quality mentoring relationships have powerful positive effects on young people. Students who regularly meet with mentors are less likely to skip school, less likely than their peers to start using drugs or alcohol, more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, and more likely to enroll in college.

"Mentoring at UCS works in the community to build relationships, skills and experiences to help our matches achieve their goals," said Ann Marie Mazzucco, Mentoring at UCS Program Manager. "We are here for those kids who need or want a mentor and to help those adults who would like to mentor by providing supports and activities to achieve excellent outcomes."

Mentoring at UCS provides the opportunity for mentors and mentees to participate in a supported one-on-one relationship where youth develop self-confidence and assurance. Qualitative benefits of having a mentor include positive thinking, increased self-confidence, reduction in anxiety, forging strong relationships with others, learning methods to cope with stress and so much more.

THE RIGHT CARE





THE RIGHT CARE

Recognizing dedication: The 2019 Harold C. “Archie” Warner Memorial Award

The Harold C. “Archie” Warner Award was created in 2008 to honor the memory of Archie Warner for his longstanding commitment to United Children’s Services. The award is presented to an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to our children’s programs.

John Cave was presented with this year’s award at the annual Recognition Luncheon. John has been an advocate for youth in the community since moving to Vermont following a 30-year career in New York’s Financial District. He has volunteered with the Boy Scouts, mentored youth during confirmation at his church, and has served as a member of the UCS Mentor Advisory Board since 2010.



“He was excited to be my mentor, it didn’t appear to be a chore,” said someone whom John had previously mentored. “He was truly interested in me and asked questions to understand my thoughts and ambitions.”

John supports programs that provide a foundation for young people. His deep commitment to youth has been invaluable in building a stronger community.

“They know what to do and help me every day.”—Youth and Family Services client; 2019 Satisfaction Survey

1 in 6

U.S. youth aged 6-17 experience a mental health disorder each year.*

YFS team members Andrea Mook and Sandy Matteson helped create a sensory room where clients can access tools to help them develop coping skills.



Providing a calming space

UCS’s Youth and Family Service (YFS) Division provides an extensive array of home and community-based services to children. We offer support and safe community environments that promote growth, development, physical and mental health and foster positive relationships.

Last fall, YFS created a sensory room for our clients—a therapeutic space with a variety of equipment that gives children with special needs personalized sensory input. Sensory equipment helps children calm and focus themselves so they can be better prepared to interact with others. Benefits of a sensory room include sensory stimulation, enhanced learning and play, and improved balance, movement and spatial orientation.

This year, thanks to a grant from the Stewart’s Shops Holiday Match, the YFS team was able to create sensory toolboxes. The toolboxes include such items as stress balls, puzzles, coloring books and more.

“The goal of the mobile toolboxes is to help individuals access safe skills when coping with difficult internal experiences,” says Andrea Mook, UCS Early Childhood Mental Health Clinician. “Clients can test out many tools and find which ones work best for them. They can then add them into their daily lives.” The toolboxes will soon be available throughout all UCS facilities.

The Right Time

Clients who are seen quickly

and in person are more likely to engage and remain in services.

1 in 5

adults experience mental illness in any given year.*

90%

of clients surveyed reported that services they received made a difference.

“I had tried several primary care practices trying to be seen as soon as possible, with no luck. I am very grateful for being seen the same day I called.”
—Susan, UCS client



UCS Client Zachary Harvill (L), appreciated Clark’s help moving into his new apartment.

Getting help when it’s needed

UCS’s Customer Care Navigators improve access and provide world-class customer service. Anyone seeking services can meet with a Customer Care Navigator during regular business hours without having to make an appointment. In the course of the session, the Customer Care Navigator will help identify how UCS can be of assistance. They will conduct a preassessment, complete the necessary documentation, and orient the client to our programs. The goal is to create an excellent client experience and ensure a seamless transition to ongoing services and supports. The availability of Customer Care Navigators allows for quicker access and reduces or eliminates wait times for individuals seeking help.

“Many clients are at their most vulnerable when choosing to reach out to UCS for help,” said Clark Gable, Customer Care Navigator. “I have heard from many that they were glad someone was able to see them right away, and while it was difficult to ask for help, they were feeling a little better already.”

*Source: NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness



THE RIGHT TIME

Improving access to psychiatric care

The Psychiatric Medical Team (PMT) supports all UCS divisions by providing medical treatments for psychiatric conditions and ensuring clinical standards of services are being maintained. The team also provides psychiatric consultation to Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC).

Over the past year, UCS significantly decreased the wait time for psychiatric services. In response to feedback that we received from our stakeholders and community partners regarding wait times, callback times and limited availability, we re-engineered our process for psychiatric referrals and consultations. We also expanded psychiatric telehealth services to both our Bennington and Northshire office locations to better meet community needs. At present, we are scheduling psychiatric referral and consult appointments within five weeks of the initial referral contact.

In addition to implementing a new process and expanding our services, we were fortunate to welcome Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Rachel Darby. Rachel earned her bachelor’s from Southern Vermont College and her Master of Science in Nursing, Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner from Walden University.

“We are delighted to have Rachel on board,” says Executive Director, Lorna Mattern. “She has a deep concern and passion for psychiatric care and will enhance our ability to help our clients.”



“I am thrilled to join UCS and to serve the residents of Bennington County. This is a great opportunity to make a difference and work with committed and caring people.”

—Rachel Darby, P.N.P.

In 2018–19, the waitlist for services went from 99 people to 17, a reduction of

83%

Emergency services responded to nearly a thousand emergency calls

999

Emergency access all day, every day

UCS Emergency Services (ES) trained, professional staff are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for crisis intervention. We provide intensive support for community members who are experiencing a psychological, behavioral or emotional crisis. Services are available to the individual in crisis and their immediate support system, as needed.

Our ES team provides mobile assessments, emergency-room screenings, crisis phone contacts, and crisis stabilization services. Crisis stabilization services are provided at Battelle House, a 24-hour supervised hospital diversion program providing service coordination and follow-up. In addition to responding to emergency calls, ES staff are in daily collaboration with the Vermont Department of Mental Health; conduct daily dispositions to review cases; complete crisis assessments in the ER and in the community, call psychiatric hospitals for bed placements, and so much more.

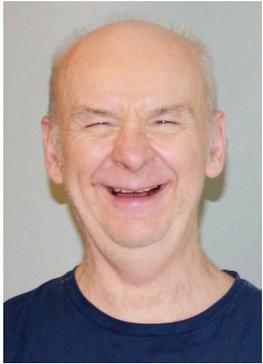
Brooke Fox joined UCS this year as the Assistant Director of Emergency Services. Brooke began her career as a crisis clinician in Massachusetts, and continued working in emergency mental health in North Carolina. She eventually came to Vermont, where she served as Director of Counseling Services at Southern Vermont College prior to joining UCS.

“The number one priority in working with emergency clients is getting them what they need safely and effectively,” notes Brooke. “We work with many community partners to provide efficient and appropriate services to individuals. We want to find the best, most resourceful way to reach people and know that our collaboration within the community aids in providing emergency mental health treatment to those in need.”

UCS works closely with our community partners—including police departments, schools, first responders, hospitals, and the like—to build a stronger community and improve access to emergency care.



Brooke Fox



Ron is a long-time UCS client and valued member of the Facilities team.

The Right Place

Providing integrated care improves access to mental health care, ultimately providing treatment that is more effective.

Depression interferes with a person's ability to complete physical job tasks about

20%

of the time, and reduces cognitive performance about

35%

of the time.*

SIX

area employers use UCS for EAP Services.

Employee Assistance Program: Access to confidential help

Good mental health is essential to everyone's overall health and wellbeing. Emotional difficulties and stressors are common and treatable. United Counseling Service offers Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) for its own staff as well as for other community organizations and businesses.

EAPs are employer-sponsored programs that offer free, confidential, professional assessments and short-term intervention. Many issues, including anxiety, depression, marital difficulties, family problems, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, emotional difficulties, stress, grief, and loss, can be addressed.

EAP goals are to assess an employee's situation, develop an action plan, and assist them in getting the services they need. The program is designed to help employees and their families address personal problems that affect their lives or job performance. A company's participation in an EAP can improve employees' mental health, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and improve employee retention.

"We are delighted to be able to offer an EAP both to our employees and to organizations in the community," says Doris Russell, Assistant Director of Outpatient and Mental Health Services. "Overall health and wellbeing is impacted by mental health concerns, and for us to be able to offer prompt, confidential, easily accessible services is imperative in creating a healthy workplace."

"First Responders do a great job of taking care of those entrusted in our care, however we do not do the best job of taking care of ourselves. EMS is an industry where emergency medical professionals are placed in extremely intense, stressful, and dangerous environments every day. Having UCS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as a local resource available for our professionals is a key component of making sure they are healthy, happy, and ready to handle any emergency."

—Forest Weyen, Executive Director, Bennington Rescue Squad



Only 57% of employees reporting moderate depression and **40%** of those who report severe depression receive treatment to control symptoms.*

*Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps



THE RIGHT PLACE



Laurie Sallisky started the youth group in 2014 to teach social, life, and business skills.

Building self-esteem: Chickens for Change

Chickens for Change (C4C) is a UCS group that helps young people develop social, life, and business skills. Laurie Sallisky, UCS Mentor Coordinator, started the group in 2014. As she began to build a caseload of young clients, it occurred to her that C4C would be an interesting way to incorporate skill-building while providing an opportunity that many may not otherwise have.

The group maintains chickens and coops, builds coops, researches relevant topics, cooks, fundraises and more. C4C's fundraising allows them to take field trips and purchase materials. Meeting weekly, UCS staff work to engage members to learn and practice skills.

"I did not grow up raising chickens and was introduced to it by my husband 10 years ago," says Laurie. "Children most often have a natural affinity to interact with and nurture animals, which can be quite therapeutic. I thought this would be a creative way to work on teaching important life skills."

The group often collaborates with other organizations, most recently Smokey House in Danby and Hildene Farm in Manchester. Since C4C's inception, approximately 40 youth from across Bennington County have benefited from the program. One C4C member shared "Thanks to this group and what I have learned here, I would like to raise my own chickens and my family is willing to give it a shot. I will teach them everything I have learned."



Chickens for Change group working on model chicken coops.

Creating jobs benefits DS clients

The UCS Facilities and Safety Division worked closely with the Developmental Services (DS) Division to get a Team Cleaning Program up and running with the hiring of two DS clients. Carol Hults, who has a cleaning business, and Celine Blair perform all aspects of cleaning UCS's Atwood facility, from cleaning floors, to trash collection and removal, to stocking and cleaning restrooms, dusting and more. The pair also monitor building security and safety and report any safety concerns to the Facilities Supervisor.

UCS Employment Connections Manager Rachella Kelly reported, "This opportunity has meant the world to them! They come to work every day with smiles on their faces and tell us how much they love their job. The quality of their work is exceptional." States Celine, "I love working for the Cleaning Program. Everybody is very welcoming, and I feel like I am part of this family. This has been a very positive experience for me."

Availability of supported work positions within the agency is growing. We look forward to providing more clients with the opportunity for employment soon.



Celine (L) and Carol enjoying some much-needed and well deserved time off.

"I think they are doing a great job. Celine and Carol's dedication to a job well done is refreshing."
— Dan Stall, UCS Facilities Supervisor

36%

of our DS clients are employed and 9 of them have been at their jobs for more than 5 years.

37%

of clients served in our employment programs are now working completely independently at their jobs.

The 2019 UCS
Staff Satisfaction Survey
results are in:

94%

reported, "UCS
values the contributions
I make."

96%

of respondents feel
driven to help the
organization succeed

98%

feel UCS offers a
family-friendly
environment

99.5%

feel their work makes
a meaningful
difference to clients

Readers Choice: UCS the best place

United Counseling Service received two 2019 Readers Choice Awards from New England Newspapers' Bennington Banner and Manchester Journal: We were voted **Best Place to Work** and **Best Community Service Organization**.



THE RIGHT PLACE





THE RIGHT PLACE

Celebrating Milestones

We are proud to be a place where our staff want to stay. UCS congratulates the 20 employees who reached milestone work anniversaries in 2018–19. We appreciate their dedication and service.



30 Years
Joanne Larsen
Nancy Donlon*



20 Years
Corrine Bakaitis*
Tammy Gosley
Pat Kinney
Vicky Potter



15 Years
Nancy Bemis
Tonya Havens
Betsy Rathbun-Gunn



10 Years
Melody Rogers

*Not pictured.



5 Years
Jareth Andrews*
Elizabeth “Ann” Barber*
Penny Breault
Erika Crowers*
Dawn Danner
Vincent Gerardi*
Betty Kenyon
Deb Lucey
Megan Parmenter*
Patrick Wilson

100% of new employees said they felt welcomed by their colleagues and encouraged to take action when they see a problem.

Peter D. Scully Award

This year’s Peter D. Scully Award went to Customer Service Manager Rose Hall, who has been with UCS more than 10 years. The award recognizes a long-serving employee who has performed their work with compassion, skill and distinction.

Rose exemplifies excellence in the workplace and has played a valuable part in leading the Transformational Change initiatives taking place within the agency to strengthen the organization and ultimately result in easier access and better care for our clients.



Customer Service Manager Rose Hall (center) with Executive Director Lorna Mattern (L) and Finance Director Jill Doyle (R).

She consistently impresses her peers with her willingness to go above and beyond. One nominator commented, “As a loved one of someone with mental illness, there are times when their needs become so great, we must ask for additional help. It can be challenging to go to work when you are so vulnerable... [Rose] took the time to support me and my loved one with great compassion and efficiency, making my vulnerable time feel less scary.”

“Rose exemplifies customer service,” said Finance Director Jill Doyle, “Her positive attitude helps make UCS a great place to work and to get care!”

Cleveland and Phyllis Dodge Community Service Award

Established in 1983, the Cleveland and Phyllis Dodge Community Service Award, selected by the Board of Directors, is presented to a community member or organization whose support of UCS and its mission has been notable and significant.

This year’s award went to the Bennington Police Department, which has provided invaluable support to both staff and clients of UCS through the years. The Department clearly cares about our clients and shows concern for their safety and wellbeing.

Recently, an officer helped one of our clients who had become combative with neighbors. Rather than arrest him or take him to the Emergency Room, the officer brought him to our Emergency Services Department, where it was discovered he had not taken his medication. The officer continued to support the client for several weeks until he had stabilized, showing compassion and concern for the safety of both our clients and our community.

“The Bennington Police Department has an amazing working relationship with United Counseling Service. At a time when we are dealing with many people suffering from substance abuse and mental health issues, we stand strong with UCS to provide community members with the support they need and deserve,” said Paul Doucette, Chief of Police. “The collaboration between our agencies is imperative to our mission of keeping the Bennington community safe.”

The Bennington Police Department is a wonderful example of positive leadership and a dedicated community partner.



Members of the Bennington Police Department at the annual Recognition Luncheon.

The Right Provider UCS has skilled, caring staff.

“This course really helped start the conversation about sensitive subjects. It was very helpful.”

—MHFA Participant

96%

of clients indicated that the staff treated them with respect, according to the 2019 UCS Client Satisfaction Survey.

Skilled staff provide community training

United Counseling Service is vested in educating the community. Just as knowing CPR gives a person skills to help another who is having a heart attack, **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** helps people assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis. In the Mental Health First Aid course, participants learn risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to turn for help.

UCS also offers a **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA)** course, which introduces attendees to the unique risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems in adolescents, builds understanding of the importance of early intervention, and teaches participants how to help an adolescent in crisis or experiencing a mental health challenge.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are another important health issue. Prolonged exposure to trauma creates an environment of toxic stress that can change the architecture of the brain due to the physiological response stress produces. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) trainings focus on sharing the science behind ACEs and why it matters. Explanations of the impact of our own childhood stress on brain development, the multiple forms of childhood stress and its impact on anyone who experiences childhood stress, as well as resiliency and how to shift the dynamics within our family, community, and society are presented. Participants come away with new ways of thinking, compassion, hope, and a motivation to act.



Certified Mental Health First Aid Trainers (L to R) Anne Marie Mazzucco, Katie Aiken, Marie DeLeon, and Amie Niles provide trainings internally and in the community.

In 2018–19...

41

Individuals were trained in MHFA/YMHFA.

13

ACEs trainings were held in the community.

370

individuals attended ACEs presentations.



THE RIGHT PROVIDER

Caring for clients and the community

Whether he is helping residents participate in the Special Olympics, coaching a Bocce team, or working with one of our group homes to provide an afternoon of drumming, **Rich Jorgensen** makes a big difference in the lives of his clients and coworkers. Rich is a case manager in our Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program.

Rich studied psychology in the '70s, a time when mental health treatment was shifting from institutionalized care to community-based care. He began his career in special education, working for two New York City schools before moving to Vermont and joining the Bennington Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC), where he rose to Assistant Director of Community Outreach. He joined UCS in 2005, after twenty-five years with BROC. Now at UCS for nearly 15 years, Rich has recently expanded his case-management work in our Northshire region.

“For as long as I can remember, we have struggled to get strong case management services in Manchester—but once Rich was assigned this task, it was done,” said CRT Manager Joanne Larsen. “He is in the northern reaches of our catchment area two days a week and has made a significant difference in the lives of the clients.”



Rich supports his clients every day, helping them live their lives as independently as possible. This can include helping with forms related to benefits, or accessing resources for their care, including eyewear and dental services. “For me as someone’s case manager, the most important thing is that people know that what matters to them matters to me, and that if I can help I will,” says Rich. “Helping someone with their care is very special.”

“Rich is a very intelligent, compassionate man, which is much to be desired in the age we live in...my son is very lucky to have Rich as a case manager,” wrote a grateful parent.

Staff also benefit from working with Rich. He steps up when staff are struggling to find housing for clients. He covers when extra help is needed to keep everyone safe. He regularly volunteers to represent our agency

in the community, giving up his personal time to talk about what we do. He cares about his clients and cares about his community.

“Working with organizations committed to changing lives and doing so alongside like-minded coworkers has been tremendous,” says Rich. “Helping others is a special privilege like no other.”

Family tragedy inspires health career

Having lost her father to suicide, **Tracy Moyer** wanted to find a way to learn more about mental health and substance abuse issues. She knew that by sharing her story and struggles she could help others, hopefully saving someone else from enduring the pain she had gone through from her devastating loss.

Tracy came onboard UCS in 1999 and has been helping our clients ever since. She is the Medical Administrative Assistant for our Psychiatric Medical Team (PMT), working closely with therapists, counselors, and direct-care workers to provide support and oversight for individuals with psychiatric medical conditions.

“I get so much satisfaction and gratification when I can make a difference in someone else’s life, whether big or small,” says Tracy. “I also enjoy being part of the PMT staff and am passionate about the nursing and medical field. PMT staff have taught me so much. I can’t imagine where I would be today without their support and guidance.”

Tracy is currently attending the Community College of Vermont. She expects to complete her nursing degree next fall, and ultimately pursue her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Nursing. She currently mentors students at CCV and was awarded a leadership scholarship, while maintaining a 4.0 GPA and raising two teenage boys.



Tracy feels strongly about the need to discuss suicide openly and honestly.

“Barriers and stigmas cannot be broken down without discussing the facts about these scary but very real issues.”

120

individuals were supported by CRT case management services this year.

1x3

On average, **one** person dies by suicide every **three** days in Vermont. Suicide is Vermont’s **8th** leading cause of death.*

1 in 6 U.S. youth ages 6–17 (equating to **7.7 million** young people, or **16.5%** of this age group) experience a mental health disorder each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control.



Tia and Pam

Boosting teens

Youth Outreach is critical to building a stronger community. Making sure that young people have the skills and support to thrive is something that **Pam Bolus** does every day. Pam works in our Youth and Family Services Division, where she makes strong connections with the teens in our program.

Pam joined UCS in 1987 and was on the team that originally developed Family Emergency Services (FES), which provides services to any family or caregiver in Bennington County who needs help dealing with a youth-related crisis.

“Pam has a heart bigger than Bennington County. She is passionate about the youth she works with,” say Kheya Ganguly, Assistant Director of Youth and Family Services. “Pam is able to dream with them while helping them ground their dreams in reality. She is one of a kind with an eagerness to reach out and help her clients and her colleagues at any time.”

Whether she is taking them on road trips, teaching them how to cook, or helping them learn the value of volunteering by helping at events, she shows compassion and inspires them to work hard. “Pam treats me like an adult,” says Tia, one of Pam’s clients, “She is honest and cool.”

*Source: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

The perfect fit: a life dedicated to service

From a young age, Courtney Randall has had a passion for helping people. When life’s obstacles prevented her from attending college after high school, she found employment in a factory. Though she was making ends meet, she knew that factory work was not what she was meant to be doing with the rest of her life.

In 2016, Courtney took advantage of an opportunity to work in UCS’s Community Supports Program, which was her first experience working with individuals with intellectual disabilities. The program helps individuals with various disabilities navigate, integrate, and create meaningful connections in their community.

“As a direct support staff worker, I was extremely nervous due to my lack of experience working with individuals who had an intellectual disability,” said Courtney. “However, the first week on the job, I felt more alive than I had ever felt before. I realized the little things in life that people take for granted make such a huge impact for the people we serve.”

Six months later, Courtney transferred to the Shared Living Program, which offers individualized home support with a contracted provider for individuals diagnosed with an intellectual disability and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder. “This was a whole different experience for me, but in a good way,” she noted. “Not only did I get to continue to spend time with the clients, I now was able to help them have the best life possible by ensuring they received the best care and participated in programs that made a difference in their life.” With her passion and skills, she was quickly promoted to Shared Living Program Manager. Courtney works hard to make sure that clients have a great home by pairing them with individuals or families who share similar interests and who are a good fit for her clients.

Courtney’s impact on the lives of our clients is huge. Whether she is taking them fishing, out for ice cream, or to the movies, she makes them feel special. She genuinely cares about her clients and coworkers and works hard to bring disability awareness to our community. Courtney, along with other staff and consumers, traveled to Montpelier in February for Disability Awareness Day. She also spoke at UCS’s annual Legislative Breakfast, expressing the importance of the work we do every day. She is a fierce advocate



Shared Living Program Manager Courtney Randall with client John, enjoying some quality time.

Continued on page 20

THE RIGHT PROVIDER

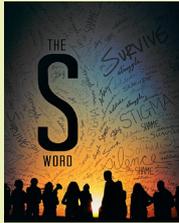




THE RIGHT PROVIDER

UCS Presents: Building a more informed community

UCS Presents is a series of free community forums designed to engage and educate. The events bring members of the community and experts together to discuss relevant issues that affect everyone. This year, we hosted four events in several locations throughout Bennington County.

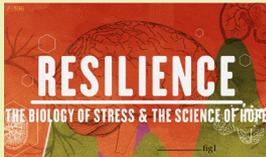


In September, Suicide Prevention Awareness month, we presented *The S Word* at Manchester Community Library. This award-winning feature documentary provides a platform for those with lived experience—people who have attempted to take their own lives and survived—to tell their stories. The film was followed by a discussion facilitated by UCS Medical Director Dr. Alya Reeve.



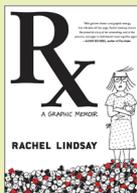
Becoming Bulletproof was screened in February at Bennington's Oldcastle Theatre, followed by a discussion with staff and clients from our Developmental Services Division. The film documents the making of an original Western Film called *Bulletproof*, and features actors with

and without disabilities who gather every year to write, produce, and star in original short films.



In April, audiences were shown *Resilience: The Biology of Stress and Science of Hope*, a documentary that delves into the science of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), as part of a national movement to prevent toxic stress. Extremely stressful experiences in

childhood can alter brain development and have lifelong effects on health and behavior. Katie Aiken, Certified ACEs Trainer, facilitated a discussion following the film.



We also worked with Manchester Community Library to bring Burlington-based author and illustrator of the graphic memoir *Rx* Rachel Lindsay, to discuss her personal journey with mental illness. She talked about the treatment of mental illness, the role of art and expression in the healing process, and the often-unavoidable choice between sanity and happiness.

Individuals served through our Shared Living Program this past year

67

Local business partners who hire Developmental Services clients

36

UCS clients participating in Supported Employment

60

Courtney Randall...continued from page 19



Courtney (L) and coworkers prepare for a holiday dinner.

for UCS clients and their rights. “Many struggle to find their calling in life; however, there could not be a more naturally fitting position for Courtney than the one she is currently in,” says coworker Justine Booth, “I have learned so much from her approach and work ethic, as well as her treatment of others.”

“Working at UCS is not only a job, it is a lifestyle,” says Courtney. “I cannot even begin to express the positive changes in my life that have occurred since coming to UCS. I am truly thankful for the opportunity to work here and help individuals every day.”

1 in 8

Emergency Room visits involve mental illness or substance use disorders.¹

50%

of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14; three-quarters by age 24.²

↑ RISK

Individuals with serious mental illness face an increased risk of having chronic medical conditions.²

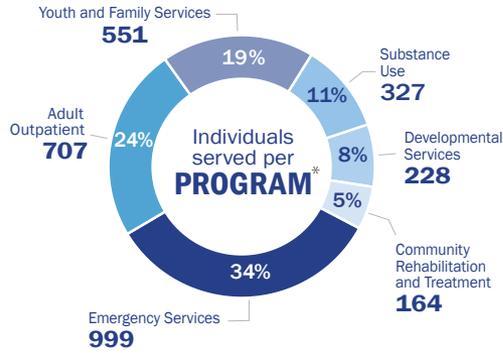
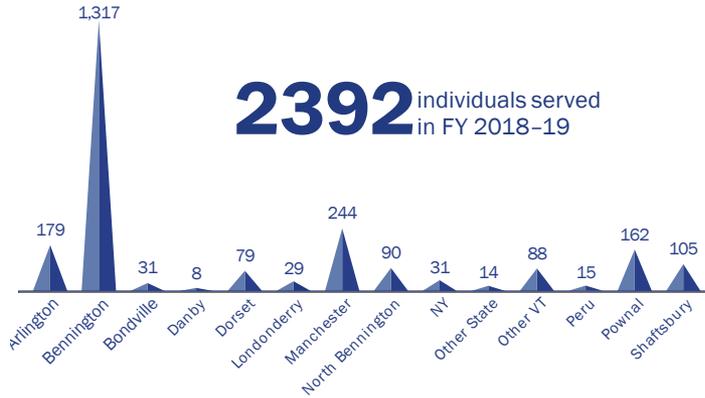
Sources: ¹NAMI.org; ²U.S. Centers for Disease Control

Additional Community Engagement Activities:

- Legislative Breakfast
- FED Up Rally
- SASH Wellness Fair
- Wellness Day at Bennington College
- Bennington Healing Practitioners Wellness Fair
- Bennington Banner Backpack Giveaway
- Bennington Youth Appreciation Day
- Bennington's 1st Annual PrideFest
- The Clothesline Project
- Put Your Best Foot Forward

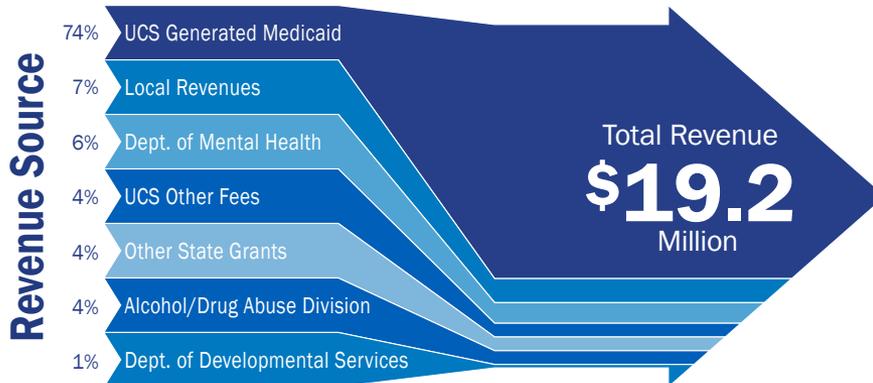
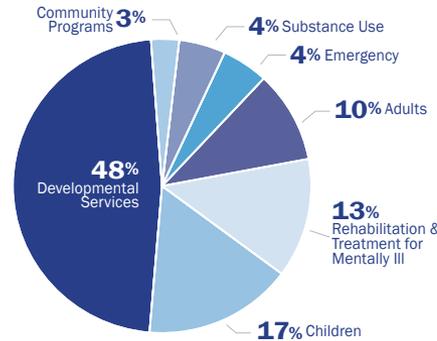
OUR NUMBERS

2392 individuals served in FY 2018-19



*Some individuals are served by more than one program

Use of Funds by Program



Budgeted Income for Fiscal 2018-19

Medicaid	\$ 14,300,952
Fees & 3rd Party Payments	\$ 395,600
Vt. Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division	\$ 704,435
Vt. Department of Mental Health	\$ 1,162,825
Vt. Dept. of Developmental Services	\$ 121,228
Other State Contracts	\$ 725,821
Local Revenue	\$ 1,335,030
Miscellaneous	\$ 473,313
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 19,219,204

Budgeted Expenses for Fiscal 2018-19

Salaries	\$ 9,857,577
Benefits	\$ 2,230,939
Other Personnel	\$ 4,007,230
Operating	\$ 1,704,686
Travel & Transport.	\$ 399,394
Building Expenses	\$ 1,019,378
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 19,219,204

Improving Access: Payment reform

The State of Vermont's new Mental Health Payment Reform represents a cultural shift in the way the state funds mental health providers, including United Counseling Service.

Payment reform is not about adding new money to the system, it is about reducing barriers and increasing flexibility to meet the needs of individuals and families. Payment reform will provide for one bundled payment supported by aligned programmatic requirements, indicators, and outcomes.

State provider payments are now linked to quality and performance, to support the goal of promoting and improving the mental health of Vermonters. This change is designed to provide better health care, better outcomes, and lower costs.





Board of Directors

- William Baldwin, *President*
- Nathaniel Marcoux, *Treasurer*
- Kathy Clark, *Secretary*
- Stephanie Eames, *Policy Council Representative*
- Theodore Bird
- Kiah Morris
- Jessica Smith

Head Start and Early Head Start provide essential services for children from birth to age 5. We partner with parents, teachers, and community members to create meaningful, measurable change.

Parent involvement

In the 2018-19 school year, Bennington County Head Start/Early Head Start launched its *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors* parenting curriculum, and hosted numerous events including: Cooking Club; Let's Cook, Willowbrook!; Explorer's Club; Gardening at Hiland Hall; Winterfest; NBVT Block Party; and a Kincaire Support Group.

OUR MISSION

Preparing children and their families for school through collaborative approaches to high-quality education, health, and social services.

OUR VISION

All children and families will be successful lifelong learners.

OUR VALUES

- Respect
- Integrity
- Positive Outlook
- Responsibility
- Equality
- Accessibility



Students in Head Start spent a wonderful evening with their families, creating beautiful pieces of snowman art to celebrate the winter season.



Dr. Masaitis (L) and staff

Access to dental care promotes student health

Dr. Anita Masaitis and her staff provided free dental screenings and fluoride application for **85** Head Start and Early Head Start children in our North Bennington and River Road classrooms. Additionally, Head Start's Tooth Tutors run oral health education programs in classrooms each fall, and provides screenings and fluoride varnish applications twice a year through a generous grant from Northeast Delta Dental.

United Children's Services Head Start Program Fiscal 2018–19

REVENUE

US Department of Health & Human Services	\$ 2,825,845
State/Local Contracts	\$ 1,490,178
Miscellaneous	\$ 1,325
Total Revenue	\$ 4,317,348

EXPENSES

Salaries	\$ 2,223,284
Fringe	\$ 512,651
Other Personnel Costs	\$ 534,979
Operating Expenses	\$ 600,917
Travel & Transportation	\$ 127,730
Building Expenses	\$ 310,931
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 6,856
Total Expenses	\$ 4,317,348

In the 2018–19 school year, Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start programs served:

HS: **136** children (**122** families)

EHS: **76** children (**71** families)

Average monthly enrollment: **97%**

54% of eligible children served in Bennington county.

91% of 136 Preschoolers and **98%** of 76 infants and toddlers received a **medical exam** in 2018–19.

51% of 136 Preschoolers and **46%** of 76 infants and toddlers received a **dental exam** in 2018–19.

Percent of children who meet or exceed age-level expectations:

Social/Emotional Development: 93% of Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

Language & Communication: 86% of Infants and Toddlers, 96% of Preschoolers

Literacy: 87% of Infants and Toddlers, 91% of Preschoolers

Mathematics: 77% of Infants and Toddlers, 95% of Preschoolers

Scientific Reasoning: 94% of 4-year-olds

Approaches to Learning: 93% of Infants and Toddlers, 92% of Preschoolers

Physical/Motor Development: 96% of Infants and Toddlers, 94% of Preschoolers

The auditor's report on compliance for the major federal programs for United Children's Services of Bennington County, Inc. expresses an unqualified opinion on all major federal programs.

Coming full circle

As a toddler, **Taiwana Anderson** was rough but sweet, always making people laugh. In 1991, she was a student at Bennington County Head Start, one of the first Head Start programs in the nation, housed at Bennington College.

At 16, Taiwana had her first child. Realizing that she would have to reprioritize, she finished high school through the Opportunities program at Sunrise Family Resource Center. Working with the organization to gain the skills and supports necessary to enter the workforce, Taiwana sought childcare and Bennington County Head Start leapt to mind—She had heard from friends with children enrolled that they had seen her picture, still hanging in the hallway from when she was a student there herself.

When she entered the building and saw her own pictures for the first time, she says, "I got teary-eyed because I knew my daughter would be in great hands. It felt like this was where she was supposed to be." The supportive staff and friendly faces sparked something in Taiwana. She decided she would go back to school and become a teacher. In the meantime, circumstances were such that Taiwana would put her further education on hold to support herself and her growing family.

Taiwana moved away for a while, but soon realized that Bennington was her home. She returned and enrolled in college, with plans to be a teacher. Seeing an opening at Head Start, she applied, and was called in for an interview. "That feeling came over me that this is what I am supposed to be doing with my life. I went into the interview being open and honest about where I was in my life and what my intentions were for myself, my job, and the children." Last year she was hired as a substitute teacher with our Head Start program. "How awesome is it to work with a bunch of strong women," says Taiwana, "and even though this is extremely tiring work, being able to come together for a common goal—our children and their futures—makes it all the more worthwhile."

"Taiwana has been a great asset to our program," reports Tonya Havens, Bennington County Head Start Site Coordinator, "She is always positive and supportive of those she is working with. It has been great to see her and her children grow through the years."

Taiwana is currently attending Community College of Vermont, working toward her Associate's in Early Childhood Education.



Taiwana now... and then, as a toddler in the Bennington County Head Start program



Stephanie Eames serves as Liaison to United Children's Service Board and chairs the Policy Council. The Policy Council oversees all aspects of the Head Start program including selection of staff, development of new policies, grant budget approval and curriculum development.

"I was driven to serve on the Policy Council to be more directly involved with my own children's education. Becoming Chair of the Policy Council has allowed me to contribute to such a crucial time of development for many local children. I am part of the UCH Board to represent the parent voice in the governance of a program that I so strongly believe in, and to give back to a community that so openly embraces me and my family."

ANNUAL FUND

100% of UCS board members contribute.

\$1,000 and up

William Drusic
in memory of Bob Drusic (UCH)
Judith Buechner
Elisabeth Bartlett Sturges
Peter and Mary Goodwin
in memory of Charlie Goodwin

\$501-1,000

Chris and Kirsty Elwell
Lisa and Peter Hillman
in memory of Gregory S. Hillman
Philip O'Neill
Robert Planer
Wilhelm and Genevieve Strohmaier
Constance West

\$251-500

Bennington Lanes
Bill and Ruth Botzow
Austin and Gillian Chinn
Dorothy Danforth
in memory of Dr. Nicholas Danforth
Peter Davis
in memory of June Davis
Bob and Cora May Howe
Alice Mintzer Sandler and Ross Sandler
in honor of Joanna Mintzer
The Richards Group
Langdon Wheeler and
Mary Katherine Metcalf
Town of Winhall

\$101-250

Leslie Addison and Jim Sullivan
Ben and Janne Brumaghim
Wade and Roberta Devlin-Scherer
Robert Fallon and Joan Leenig
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Haight
Hayden Plumbing and Heating Inc.
Mary and Dave Hazelton
in honor of Jon and Samantha Kenyon
Richard and Ann Jackson
William and Janis Ketterer
Ellen D. Kouwenhoven
in memory of Gerrit Kouwenhoven
Harry and Patricia Lapham
Lorna and Tom Mattern
Michael and Susan McKenna

Together, we are building a stronger community. **Thank you!**

Keith and Patty Michl
Millerbernd
Bruce and Nancy Nash
Keith and Pam Nemlich
in memory of Gerrit Kouwenhoven
Cheryl Parker O'Connor
Ralph and Mary Provenza
Daisy Rockwell
Jeff and Alex Sands
Southwestern Vermont Medical
Center Emergency Department
in memory of Dustin Lynds
Barbara Raskin and Robin Tarnas
Norma and Ted Thomas

Up to \$100

John and Karen Ahearn
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Albert
Gloria and Robert Alexander
Rita Allard
Leonard Anzivino
Richard Bartholomae
Lois M. Beardwood
in honor of Catherine Hickey
Ellen Perry Berkeley
Axel Blomberg
Judy Boehlert
Bolio Propane Service, LLC
Roger and Julia Bolton
Robert and Judith Brower
Cambridge Pee Wee Football
in memory of Dustin Lynds
Sandra Castelbaum
Deborah and John Cave
Kenneth and Lila Cestone
Charles and Kathryn Chamberlain
Linda and Philip Chapman
Kathy and Roger Clark
Shelly Coffin
in memory of Dustin Lynds
James and Lodie Colvin
Marlyn D. Couture
in memory of Kimberly Couture Rist
John and Lisa Cueman
Brian Cunningham
DML Corp.
Paul and Kelly DiIonna
Dean Dixon
Julian A. Dixon
Margaret Donovan
Philip Dorman
in memory of Dustin Lynds

Jane and Stephen Duda
Frederick and Noreen Dunn
Patricia J. Dupree
B.P.O. Elks #567
John and Mary English
Janet Fabricius
Mary Feidner
Dr. Donald R. Ferrell, PhD
in honor of Joanna Mintzer
Monument Electric
Heidi and Jon French
Barbara Geer
*in honor of Pam Bolus and
Gladys Campbell*
Walt and Dana Gilbert
Thomas and Linda Goertz
Ruth Goldstone
Barbara Goodwin
in memory of Charlie Goodwin
Peter and Mary Goodwin
in memory of Charlie Goodwin
R.C. Goodwin
in memory of Charlie Goodwin
The Rev. Louis and Mrs. Marie Guariniello
Henry and Kathleen Hall
John and Bonnie Halpin
in memory of Maryanne Nesbitt
Dean and Janet Hanson
Matt Harrington
Elaine Harwood
Huc Hauser
Darlene Hazelton
John Hearst
William and Ruthann Hession
Stuart and Colleen Hoskins
David and Shirley Hosley
in honor of Jeffrey Casey
David and Diane Howard
William Innes
William and Lori Jerome
Hugh A. Johnson
Roger D. Jones
in memory of Thelma B. Jones
Theresa Kubisiak
Edwin Lawrence
James Lee
in honor of Sue Pierce
G. Leong
in honor of Jason Fleming
Alan and Terry Lindsey
Gennaro and Diana Lobosco
Frederick and Maureen Loy

Michael and Heidi Lynn
Claire and John Lyons
Dolores K. Mahlmann
Ellen Maloney
Victor and Kim Martini
Martin's Mini Mart
Harold McClellan
in memory of Dustin Lynds
Mary McGuinness
Peter and Lisa McGuire
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Bowlathon brought in more than \$31K



This year's Bowlathon, the primary fundraising vehicle for Mentoring at UCS, was a daylong event attended by hundreds of bowlers. The theme was "Sports," and bowlers and volunteers, wearing their favorite team attire, helped raise over \$31,000 to support the program. Donations came from individuals and organizations throughout the county. Among the day's many activities were a silent auction, prizes for highest funds raised, and special pin awards presented for best team spirit during every wave.

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Barn Sale raised \$58,917

The committee works year-round to ensure the success of this 2-day event.

Proceeds from The Barn Sale are earmarked specifically for UCS's Northshire programs, which include: substance abuse recovery, outpatient mental health counseling, youth and family services, and psychiatry, among others.



Committee Chairs:

Beth Alden, Craigin Salsgiver, Nancy Wolf

Celebrating our community: UCS Superhero 5K

Every community needs special events that draw residents together, entice people to visit, promote local businesses and feature something special. The Inaugural Superhero 5K did that and more. UCS held its inaugural Superhero 5K in November 2018. The 3.1-mile route began and ended at the Bennington Recreation Center with **130 runners and walkers**, many dressed as their favorite superhero, traveling down a portion of Main Street that was closed to traffic. **38 younger children** participated in the shorter Kids' Dash, running alongside members of the Bennington Police Department.



Many community partners worked to help make this a successful and fun event. RiseVt Training for More offered a training program to get ready for the 5K, and the Bennington Police Department kept runners safe and participated in the Kids' Dash.

The event raised **\$3,500 for the UCS Client Wellness Fund**. Wellness activities can help individuals focus, overcome obstacles, get along with others, and decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety. Wellness programs are broad and can include physical fitness, seminars, workshops, field trips, artistic endeavors such as trips to museums, and a wide array of activities that promote general wellbeing for our clients.



To see more photos from our events, visit and like us on [facebook.com/UnitedCounselingService](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedCounselingService).

"We love taking part in local 5ks as a family! This was my oldest son Trent's first 5k and my first 5k since baby #3 in June! My son Eric was a part of the kids' fun run and loved running with the BPD," says mom and runner Jessica White.

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FUNDRAISING



United Counseling Service
100 Ledge Hill Drive
P.O. Box 588
Bennington, VT 05201

Non-Profit Organization
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Bennington, VT 05201

United Counseling Service Main Office
100 Ledge Hill Drive, Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 442-5491

United Counseling Service Northshire Office
5312 Main Street, Manchester Center, VT 05255
(802) 362-3950

Atwood Center for Developmental Services
335 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Battelle House Crisis Stabilization Center
348 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Burgess Road Youth and Family Services
21 Burgess Road, Bennington, VT 05201

Community Rehabilitation and Treatment
316 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Youth and Family Services
314 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Head Start/Early Head Start Main Office
2 Park Street, North Bennington, VT 05257
(802) 442-3686

Early Head Start Infant and Toddler Center
100 Ledge Hill Drive, Bennington, VT 05201

Head Start/Early Head Start
5312 Main Street, Manchester Center, VT 05255

Head Start/Early Head Start
59 River Road, North Bennington, VT 05257

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97 School House Road, Pownal, VT 05261

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