



Annual Report Welcome to our Annual Report Highlights AR

Our 2020-21 annual report now has its own section on our website (ucsvt.org/annualreport21) and a dedicated YouTube playlist (bit.ly/ucs21ar).

You can find videos and expanded information on many of the articles in this report. Just look for the YT and AR symbols and use these QR codes for quick access.



We are continually learning, growing and adapting to serve our community and meet the growing need for our services. Our 2021 Annual Report is a snapshot of our accomplishments and a reflection of the hard work and devotion of our staff, who have risen to the challenge of this year and who have been nothing short of heroic.

In times like this, with increased substance use, anxiety, stress, and depression, we are reminded of how interconnected we all are. While the future is unpredictable, one thing I know for sure: together we can get

Thank you for helping us build a stronger community.

—Lorna Mattern, Executive Director

Thank you to the community!

This year, United Counseling Service and its dedicated staff met every challenge the pandemic threw at us. We were able to expand services and supports as the need and demand for services continued to grow. The power of community to benefit health is far greater than just our one organization. Ours encompasses UCS staff, families, partner organizations, board members, council members, clients and their families, and others too



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The Board is proud of the strength of our staff and this community, the hurdles that have been overcome, and the successes that have been achieved during this challenging year.

—Bob Thompson, President of the Board of Directors

Vermont Care Partners: Working together to build a unified Electronic Medical Records system (AR)





2020 inity since 1 Vermont Care Partners (VCP) is a network of sixteen agencies that provide mental health, substance use disorder, and developmental disability services and supports in every community in Vermont. VCP agencies are leaders in reshaping the ways that **1**958. Vermonters stay well. This year, UCS and three other VCP member agencies cooperated to implement

the use of a new Electronic Medical Records system (EMR), using Netsmart's myAvatarTM. The new system helps UCS and its partners more easily access and produce quality data to improve the clinical operations of the agencies, by providing metrics that inform workflow processes. This data will be reported to the State, ensuring the agencies are meeting the needs of Vermonters in a timely manner and as required. The data-driven EMR system is also integral in providing clinical summaries that help agency leadership gain insight into behavioral trends and align services to evolving needs.

In addition to the long-term community benefits arising from the increased data, the new platform now allows UCS and its partnering agencies to share contracted clinical services, a true boon in this time of tremendous need and ongoing staff shortages.

Superhero 5K went virtual for 2020

Thanks to the support of our super sponsors, heroic planning and organization by UCS staff, and enthusiastic community participation, our virtual Superhero 5K was a success participants trained for weeks ahead, ran outdoors or on their treadmills, and got a bit healthier and happier in the process!

> Bennington I Banner Manchester Journal Northeast Benefits Management





The Barn Sale raised over \$70,000 AR

After a year's hiatus, our 2021 event was warmly welcomed by bargain hunters from near and far.

Proceeds from the annual Barn Sale are earmarked for UCS's Northshire programs, including substance abuse recovery, outpatient mental health counseling, youth and family services, psychiatry, and other individual and group services supporting mental health.

Committee Chair: Craigin Salsgiver

Together we made it happen: Spring Center

This year, our Early Childhood Services division opened the Spring Center, an 11,000 square foot addition to the Bennington Recreation Center. In addition to providing multi-use community Increase in space, this much-anticipated expansion increases access to Head Start and Early Head Start, and the lifelong benefits the programs help foster, for families throughout Bennington County. Partnering with the Town of Bennington and other local organizations, we was able to complete this innovative multi-million-dollar project nearly on schedule, despite the ongoing health crisis. Together we are strengthening the community, one family at a time.

Head Start* is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)







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





335 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201 **Battelle House Crisis Stabilization Center** 348 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201 **Burgess Road Youth and Family Services** Burgess Road, Bennington, VT 05201 **Community Rehabilitation and Treatment** 316 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Children, Youth, and Family Services 314 Dewey Street, Bennington, VT 05201 Head Start/Early Head Start Main Office 2 Park Street, North Bennington, VT 05257 Head Start/Early Head Start Spring Center

655 Gage Street, Bennington, VT 05201

Early Head Start Infant and Toddler Center 100 Ledge Hill Drive, Bennington, VT 05201 Head Start/Early Head Start 5312 Main Street, Manchester Ctr, VT 05255 Head Start/Early Head Start 97 School House Road, Pownal, VT 05261

UCS Residential Facilties Autumn House Group Home

Bank Street Independent Living Complex Gatling House Group Home South Street Group Home Union Street Group Home

 $United\ Counseling\ Service\ provides\ outpatient\ counseling\ and\ addiction\ services,\ emergency\ mental\ health\ services,\ extensive\ rehabilitation$ services, home and school-based services, employment services for people recovering from mental illness or with developmental disabilities, and Early Childhood Services. We are here for you! For more information about UCS visit www.ucsvt.org or call 802.442.5491.





Celebrating coworkers and community







Programs and Services

UCS supports thousands of Bennington County residents and a host of local organizations.

Outpatient Mental Health

- Child, adult, family, and couples counseling
- Psychotherapy groups
- Mental health and developmental disabilities
- Evaluation and psychological testing
- Equine Assisted Therapy

Business Programs

• Management consultation

• Community partnerships

• Trainings/Webinars

• Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Substance Use Programs

• Consultation to agencies and schools

Community Rehabilitation

• Substance abuse receiving center

• Intensive Outpatient Program

and Treatment (CRT)

• Community support services

• Supported employment program

• Programs for those with dual diagnoses

• Battelle House crisis stabilization center

Psychiatric and Crisis Services

residential services

• Community outreach

• Residential program

• Individual counseling

Psychiatric evaluation

• Mobile crisis services

Medication management

• 24-hour emergency service

• Liaison to intensive hospital care

Group counseling

• Alcohol and drug abuse counseling and education

• Assessment for and facilitation of detox or

• Community education and consultation services





Children, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS) • Family Emergency Services (FES)

- Family outreach services
- Individual and group therapy
- Therapeutic case management
- Respite services
- School-based services
- Jump on Board for Success (JOBS) program • Transitional Living Program
- Teens for Change Youth Group
- Camp Be A Kid
- Mentoring at UCS
- Psychiatric Urgent Care for Kids (PUCK)

Developmental Services • Residential services including group homes and shared living

• Community support services

- College Steps Program
- · Case Management services
- Family support services
- Employment services
- Crisis services
- The Gathering Place at Camp Ondawa

Early Childhood Services (ECS)

• Bennington County Head Start

- Bennington County Early Head Start • Parenting and family education
- Family outreach



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2020-2021 Highlights: A year of growth, change, and building stronger communities while adapting to the challenges of the ongoing public health crisis.



New equine therapy program expands healing options (11) (AR) This year, we partnered with Kanthaka of North Bennington, Inc.

to offer equine-assisted therapy and learning. UCS's Equine Assisted Therapy program combines two well-

regarded treatment protocols: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Psychotherapy (EMDR) and Equine Assisted

Clinicians

Hours of

therapy

People can benefit from the healing power of horses: Though horses are highly sensitive to human emotions, they do not process information the way people do. Equine responses are based on the energy present in the moment, a quality that helps clients work through their emotional struggles with direct immediate feedback and without being judged.

Lori Vadakin, Director of Outpatient and

"I am calmer, I am not worrying a lot, I am leaving Substance Use Services, is certified as an EMDR everything that bothers me behind ... and EquiLateral™ Therapist. At the barn, she also I am right here with the horse.'

provides clinical consultations to other clinicians **—Equine Assisted Therapy client** who are learning EMDR. "The relationships that clients build with the horses are so meaningful

and impactful," says Vadakin. "To be able to offer this experience is invaluable. The horses provide the clients with a feeling of calm and a sense that they can cope with anything."

UCS helps Vermont's migrant farmworkers

Doris Russell, Assistant Director of Mental Health with UCS, has been providing individual therapy sessions to undocumented dairy farmworkers throughout Vermont, many of whom are experiencing

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression.



healing modalities.

Through a contract with Vermont Care Partners and a University of Vermont Bridges to Health grant, Russell, who is bilingual, has been able to serve this cohort while reducing the language barrier to both getting and providing

We are providing a much-needed service to this community," says Russell. "The armworkers have come from Mexico, Guatemala and Uruguay, and are often isolated, iving in fear of immigration authorities."

Intensive Outpatient Program

There has been an increased demand for higher treatment for many who are working through addiction and mental health related issues. Our Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) offers innovative, mindful based sobriety for adults seeking help with substance use and co-occurring disorders that require more intense treatment than outpatient therapy but not the need for residential or inpatient care. The program is designed to address multiple factors concurrently, to help participants maintain and achieve sobriety and improve everyday functioning. The treatment includes evidencebased protocols such as Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), Collaborative Network Approach (CNA),

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and several other



"Without a doubt ... the tools my clinician taught me to apply in my life (like setting boundaries) have not only helped me in dealing with [my] addiction, but in matters in other Individuals areas in mv life."

-Client Satisfaction Survey

Peer Groups offer strength in numbers (AR)

UCS peer groups are designed to offer support among people who share similar life experiences. Before COVID-19 struck, the peer groups were held in person, but health department restrictions on gathering sizes changed the paradigm.

Annette and Greg, who are approved and funded by Vermont Psychiatric Survivors to lead peer groups, led a "Hot Topics" group from Annette's living room, where the pair, socially distanced and equipped with several phones, had participants call in. Greg built the group's roster of topics based on requests from the members,

whom he calls the real group leaders. The popular "Sunshine Social Group" was relocated to Bennington's Washington Elms, where the two led activities from the lawn for residents spaced across the porch. When winter saw a second surge of the virus, licensing limits prevented nonresidents from entering the building. Instead, Annette encouraged a few of the residents to take charge of choosing movies, set up Bingo nights, and organize snacks. Washington Elms owner Melissa Greason expressed how much UCS's support groups have helped the residents—UCS clients and non-clients alike—who all struggle with the restrictions brought on by the public health crisis.



Other peer groups convene outside under the tent at our

main office location. Nancy, who runs the "Living Well" group, provides peers with self-help education, presenting different topics weekly. One member reported that attending the group had renewed her sense of hopefulness and motivation. Meeting others who have lived through a debilitating experience with mental illness and made it to the other side is powerful.

Peer leader Caroline offers "Friends and Fun," a comforting gathering of peers that provides activities focused on helping members develop distraction and relaxation techniques. The National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) also provides support groups online. CRT Advisory Committee board member Andrea also sits on the NAMI board and is active in their programs. Individually and as a group, our peer leaders bring a wealth of perspectives to fellow community members seeking support, as they share insights they have gained from their individual and collective experience with mental illness and mental health issues.

Mentoring provides a vital link m

Mentoring at UCS offers youth and their adult mentors opportunities to participate in new experiences and develop shared values. Research has long demonstrated that young people benefit from close, caring relationships with adults who serve as positive role models. At-risk youth with mentors have better attitudes toward school, increased social and emotional development, improved self-esteem, and are more likely to go to college than their nonmentored peers.

Over the past year, UCS mentors met with their mentees in virtual space. Since summer, they have been able to resume in-person activities,

thanks in large part to longtime sponsor The Bank of Bennington, who continued to support the program throughout the year, even after the cancellation of the Bowlathon, its major fundraising event.

UCS mentor Andrea Luchini says of her mentee, "The mentoring program has not only been a great way for Jailynn to experience new things and have time away from her younger siblings, but she has also loved the social aspect...making friends outside of school has definitely

been a highlight. I've watched her self-confidence blossom as she interacts with new people. It's also amazing to watch her continually challenge herself—her inner strength and bravery are an example for us all!"

PUCK: an innovative approach for kids in crisis w

Psychiatric Urgent Care for Kids (PUCK) is designed to meet the needs of children in crisis. UCS developed PUCK in collaboration with Southwestern Vermont Healthcare (SVHC) as a response to the increased use of the Emergency Room in dealing with kids in a mental health crisis. The program, the first of its kind in Vermont, diverts children

experiencing serious behavioral or mental health crises away from the ER and into a childoriented setting where they can receive appropriate care in a more conducive environment.

The primary goal of PUCK is to provide an alternative to the ER for children in psychological distress, and in turn reduce the level of adverse experiences that children face by limiting law enforcement encounters and ER visits; post-intervention goals are to help children re-enter and stay in school, and to create effective treatment plans. This child-centered approach also helps free up community resources such as police department staff time and available beds in the emergency department.

When I was upset about missing my mom or my medical condition, they were there for me and showed me how to handle it."

-Client Satisfaction Survey

Reaching the Community (17)

In this increasingly virtual world, we worked to reach our community with videostreamed education and resources. UCS presented films and video panel discussions with topics ranging from learning helpful interventions and tools for parents to help children who are stressed out, to learning mindfulness techniques to reduce stress—even a webinar on sleep. UCS's experts worked to provide the platforms to reach the most people possible, so that the community could get needed help and grow in self awareness.

Angst: Raising Awareness about Anxiety, with panel discussion **Practicing Mindfulness**

Our Kids Are More Stressed than Ever— What Can We Do About It? Wellness Moments self-help series



146

Kids received

services

hrough PUCK







Providing care in the hardest of times.

In March, one of our Developmental Services

group homes was featured in a story by Seven Days and Vermont Public Radio about the all-too-human cost of the pandemic.

Suffering through a housewide COVID-19 outbreak that began in December and hit residents and staff

alike, house manager Tina Fede and her team worked countless hours caring for this tight-knit group of special-needs adults. They quarantined together when necessary, so that the clients in their care, many of whom are unable to fully comprehend the situation, could weather the crisis with as much care, comfort, and dignity as possible. Read the full

We believe it is important to share heartbreaking and heartwarming We hope you will read more and listen to VPR's excerpt.

this story, which is in equal parts

Budgeted Income for Fiscal 2020-21

Board of Directors

Robert Thompson, President

Nathaniel Marcoux, Treasurer

William Baldwin, Secretary

Charles Letourneau, Vice President

Joseph O'Dea, Counsel to the Board

for Bennington County.

David Ballou

Kristi Cross

Lee Romano

Joanna Mintzer

Stephanie Mulligan

The Board of Directors oversees the operations of the

community mental health and developmental services

Medicaid \$ 15,685,064 Fees & 3rd Party Payments \$ 459,555 Vt. Alcohol & Drug Abuse Division \$ 490,819 Vt. Dept. of Mental Health \$ 1,130,611 Vt. Dept. of Developmental Services \$ 103,619 Other State Contracts \$ 326,194 Local Revenue \$ 1,320,018 Miscellaneous \$ 813,391 **TOTAL REVENUE** \$20,329,271

Budgeted Expenses for Fiscal 2020-21

Salaries \$ 10,071,391 \$ 2,571,604 Fringe Benefits Other Personnel Costs \$ 4,253,911 Operating Expenses \$ 2,047,501 Travel & Transportation \$ 336,142 **Building Expenses** \$ 1,048,722 TOTAL EXPENSES \$20,329,271

Senior Leadership Team

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

Lorna Mattern, Executive Director

Leadership and Financial Highlights

Leslie Addison, Director of Human Resources

Dawn Danner, Director of Developmental Services

Jill Doyle, *Director of Finance*

Amy Fela, Director of Operations

Jason Fleming, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Services Heidi French, Director of Community Relations and Development

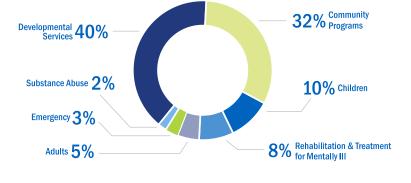
Julie Pagliccia, Director of Northshire Services

Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Director of Early Childhood Services

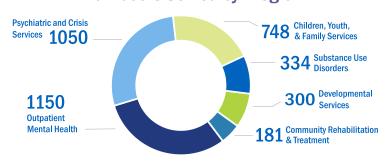
Alya Reeve, MD, Medical Director

Lori Vadakin, Director of Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Services

Use of Funds by Program



Individuals Served by Program



Recognizing excellence W AR



Director of Early Childhood Services Betsy Rathbun-Gunn presented the Harold C. "Archie" Warner Award to Jack Byer, lead architect at Goldstone Architecture. Jack designed our new pring Center, spending countless hours helpin urn our vision into reality and creating a beautifu space for the children and families we serve.



This year's Cleveland and Phyllis Dodge Award for community service went to UCS Board Chair Bob Thompson. With the agency facing an uncertain future due to the pandemic, Bob worked tirelessly to secure a federal PPP Loan, helping keep our workforce intact and our doors open to a

UCS is a great place to work and stay. AR Staff who stay longer help us

remain competitive and able to provide the highest level of care Each year, we publicly recognize employees who have reached 40 YEAR milestone anniversaries, as well as those who have gone above and beyond on behalf of their community. More UCS staff are recognized on our website!























Glenn Nesbitt

Tommy Parker Alex Tarnas-Raskin

*Source: MENTOR Vermont (mentorvt.org)

86.5%

of mentees in VT

say mentoring

made a difference

in their lives*



2020-2021 Annual Report

Bennington County 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.

OUR MISSION: To prepare 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



Head Start* is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

United Children's Services Board of Directors

William Baldwin, *President* Kathleen Clark, *Secretary* Nathaniel Marcoux, *Treasurer* Sarah Perry, *Policy Council*

Representative Jessica Smith-Harlteben

Read and see more

On our website (**ucsvt.org/annualreport21**) and YouTube playlist (**bit.ly/ucs21ar**), you can find videos and expanded information on many of UCS's 2020–21 activities.







Room to Grow

In partnership with the Town of Bennington, UCS's newest Head Start facility, the **Spring Center** opened this year to great fanfare. The new building expands access to childcare and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. Visit our online Annual Report to read more about the Spring Center and view our gallery of images from the Grand Opening.

Little Free Library project expands access to books

This year Bennington County Head Start worked to increase family and community access to literacy opportunities. With a grant from Sunrise Family Resource Center, we partnered with Bennington Area Makers (BAM), Alliance for Community Transformation (ACT), and Head Start families to design and construct Little Free Libraries, which we installed around Bennington County.

Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to be a catalyst for building community, inspiring readers, and expanding book access for all through a global network of volunteer-led Little Free Libraries. Little Free Libraries have already been installed at **Pownal School**, **the Spring Center** (Bennington), **Shires Housing Development** (North Bennington), and **Arlington Recreation Park**.

As our Little Free Library project continues to gain traction and interest, more libraries are popping up in the communities we serve. The public is invited to take—or leave!—a book.



With support from area organizations, Bennington County Head Start students, family members, and staff joined together to build **Little Free Libraries**, which were then installed in locations across Bennington County.



Everyone Eats

Over 600 Everyone Eats vouchers and meals were distributed to Head Start families, staff and United Counseling Service staff. The Vermont Department of Health and Dutchman's Tavern in Bennington helped make sure meals were delivered safely and securely to the UCS staff and clients who were quarantining together inside group homes at the time.



Main Office (802) 442-3686

2 Park Street, North Bennington, VT 05257

Locations in Bennington North Bennington Manchester Pownal

ucsvt.org/programs/ benningtoncountyheadstart

School Readiness

Last year, we reported on changes in how we delivered services and impacts on School Readiness Goals data resulting from the interruption to learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we continue to see the effects of the public health crisis on children's learning and development, though in different ways from last year.

In 2020–21, almost all children were enrolled in our onsite programs, with only a couple of children enrolled fully virtual for the entire school year. The program used a hybrid learning schedule, with four onsite full days and one

virtual learning day each week.

All children enrolled were assessed at the Fall Baseline, Winter Midpoint, and Spring Final Progress checkpoints this year. Teachers' curriculum heavily emphasized lessons and experiences in Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, and Approaches to Learning, as part of the School Readiness goals. In general, this year's enrolled children showed the lowest incoming baseline data that we have ever seen at the program level.



Overall, the children made good progress. However, for most domain areas of learning, we would like to see additional progress before school transition for the four-year-olds in our program: as the children most impacted by the pandemic, it is yet to be determined how long it will take for them to make up the loss of learning. There is also a significantly higher percentage of enrolled children receiving disabilities services than in previous years. This year, 25% of enrolled preschoolers have an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and 55% of enrolled infants and toddlers have an active Individualized Family Support Plan/Vermont One Plan.

Percent of children meeting/exceeding age-level expectation:

Social and Emotional Development 96% of infants and toddlers • 87% of three-year-olds • 62% of four-year-olds (increased 30% from fall)

Language Development 75% of infants and toddlers • 88% of three-year-olds • 77% of four-year-olds (increased 24% from fall)

Literacy Development 95% of infants and toddlers • 73% of three-year-olds • 71% of four-year-olds (increased 42% from fall)

Mathematics 87% of infants and toddlers • 78% of three-year-olds • 57% of four-year-olds (increased 32% from fall)

Approaches to Learning 95% of infants and toddlers • 82% of three-year-olds • 57% of four-year-olds (increased 14% from fall)

Physical Development 98% of infants and toddlers • 89% of three-year-olds • 93% of four-year-olds (increased 68% from fall)

 $\begin{array}{ll} \textbf{Scientific Reasoning} \ 99\% \ of \ preschoolers \ emerging \ or \ meets \ program \ expectation \end{array}$

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



The UCS Infant/Toddler Center had a well-attended end-of-school-year car parade, with each child having at least one car to cheer them on. This was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate accomplishments and allow for family involvement while keeping public health and safety guidelines at the forefront.



Like other facilities, our **North Bennington** location welcomed children and families back for onsite, inperson learning and services. Families were offered a bagel to start their day, and a "hopes and dreams" card to complete and return to their child's teacher. At the end of the year, families received their cards back with a portfolio of their child's work.

In the 2020-21 school year,

Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start programs served:

EARLY HEAD START:

64 children enrolled / **59** families served

88% average monthly enrollment*

(Sept. 2020–Aug. 2021 due to summer funds received) **84%** of enrolled children received **medical exams**

20% of enrolled children received **dental exams**

HEAD START:

109 children enrolled / **106** families served **82%** average monthly enrollment*

72% of enrolled children received medical exams
64% of enrolled children received dental exams

*It is important to note that due to COVID-19 precautions, preschool classroom sizes were decreased and one EHS classroom was closed.

"Serving on the Policy Council has been a great way to connect... As a board member, I've had the opportunity to be more involved in my children's education. Policy Council allows for my voice to be heard, not only at my children's school, but also throughout the community."

-Sarah Perry, Board Member and Policy Council, United Children's Services

United Children's Services Head Start Program Fiscal 2020–21

REVENUE

Total Revenue	\$ 4,569,726
Total Davisson	¢ 4 ECO 700
Miscellaneous	\$ 128,780
State/Local Contracts	\$ 1,545,174
Health & Human Services	\$ 2,895,772
US Department of	

	 -,,-
EXPENSES	
Salaries	\$ 2,328,196
Fringe	\$ 636,005
Other Personnel Costs	\$ 415,453
Operating Expenses	\$ 638,847
Travel & Transportation	\$ 133,828
Building Expenses	\$ 404,574
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 12,823
Total Expenses	\$ 4,569,726