

NORTHWESTERN
COUNSELING
& SUPPORT SERVICES

Strategic Plan
2011 - 2016

Community Music Through Collaboration



Our Conductor's Welcome



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Executive Director

A single instrument can convey enormous sound and delight, yet an orchestra brings many instruments and musicians together to create beautiful music. Music unites us all and reminds us of the many special moments in our lives. It brings hope, strength and joy to all of us. In the same way, NCSS unites our community by weaving together services and programs that promote healthy living and emotional well-being. We recognize how important the community is in our performance.

As each conductor must put notes down on paper for the orchestra to follow, NCSS has brought together our notes and chords for the next several years in this report. We invite you to relax and enjoy a review of our past and future compositions in the following pages.



Our Mission is to ensure that the residents of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties have access to high quality services, which promote healthy living and emotional well-being.

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Inc. (NCSS) has distinguished itself as a quality organization committed to creating a stronger community for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, one person at a time. What sets NCSS apart from other service providers is our commitment to quality, our belief in the importance of education and training, our ability to develop innovative programming, our passion for collaboration, and most importantly our committed and dedicated staff.



Our Values provide a foundation and drive our decision making.

- Ensuring the **safety** and well-being of employees and persons served
- **Responsiveness** through timely and effective services
- Delivering services with **compassion** through appreciation of diversity, with empathy and respect
- Unwavering commitment to **integrity** ensures we live up to what we say we are going to do

Our Organizational Commitments reflect our quality.

- A commitment to being the **highest quality** mental health organization in Vermont
- An abiding **concern for the well-being** of our clients and a commitment to improving their lives through counseling and support
- Education and training support of staff to develop new programs based on **evidence-based practices**
- An appreciation of the **diversity and culture** of our staff and clients as well as their individualized beliefs
- Development of **innovative programming** to address community and individual needs



Recent Accomplishments (2007-2011)

NCSS Celebrates its 50th Anniversary

- Development of a state of the art Family Center offering a welcoming space for families to learn and access services in a single location
- NCSS has achieved international accreditation for its full spectrum of autism services making it first in the state, and fifth in North America to do so
- Implementation and growth of our deaf and hard of hearing program (both staff and persons served). The largest community-based program in the State of Vermont to serve and employ the deaf and hard of hearing
- Achieved substance abuse designation for adolescents
- Implementation of our vision of high quality learning at Soar Learning Center, which has grown to become the second largest alternative program in the State of Vermont
- Development of special community trainings to provide information and address stigma (i.e. Mental Health First Aid, Grand Rounds, and Playmakers)
- Enhanced employment and care for employees (measured by: four consecutive years of decline in staff turn over rates due to numerous ongoing initiatives, positive staff climate surveys, strategic planning process feedback, etc.)
- Successful renewal of the highest level of CARF accreditation for 18 agency programs
- Successful implementation of the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system
- Expansion of services in Grand Isle County, and Richford
- Children, Youth & Family Early Intervention Program - First in the State of Vermont to meet all State and Federal quality standards
- Established adult crisis bed program
- Efforts to reduce stigma by educating the community about the importance of support and early intervention
- Creation of the first adolescent treatment court in Vermont
- Establishment of a local camp for children and adults with autism

S.W.O.T. Summary

Strengths

- Dedicated and compassionate staff
- Executive Director's inspiring leadership and vision
- Strength and tenure of leadership team
- Enhanced psychiatry services to Northwestern Medical Center (NMC)
- Entrepreneurial nature of organization
- Agency's commitment to supporting staff education and training
- NCSS is a sizeable regional employer
- A significant number of cross divisional initiatives and collaboration
- Breadth of services
- Growth of organization
- Enhanced quality and diversity of staff as well as improved retention
- Implementation of an Electronic Medical Record (EMR)
- Team oriented approach
- Advocacy for clients
- Educational and training opportunities for our community
- Supporting clients with a wide range of abilities to live, work and contribute within their community

Weaknesses

- Growing wait list for high demand programs
- Challenges with communication across the Agency
- Organizational size and complexity
- Lack of State Designation for alcohol and substance abuse services
- As a result of different clinical models, tension exists between NCSS and primary care providers
- Limited capacity for mobile crisis and outreach
- Lack of diversified funding sources
- Community understanding of our programs and funding constraints
- Maintaining connectedness with staff at satellite locations
- Lack of recreational activities for clients

Opportunities

- Form partnerships to provide services to veterans and their families
- Develop services for Department of Corrections new criteria for individuals with Severe Functional Impairment (SFI)
- Develop services for Department of Education initiative in Positive Behavioral Support (PBS)
- Explore creative solutions for optimal use of office space through the utilization of improved technology
- Celebrate and promote agency successes and achievements
- Expand elder services to address growing demographic need
- Participate in Health care reform/Blueprint initiative
- Create more community options for individuals with intense medical needs
- Explore the need for a residential facility for individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Threats

- Federal and State budget cuts
- State “Challenges for Change” initiative
- Increased health care costs
- Increased prescription drug abuse and crime
- Lack of economic development and limited tax base for State revenues
- Limited transportation
- Lack of affordable housing
- Increased need for more community based elder care programs



Environmental Scan

Political

- High military deployment rate for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties
- Cost of replacing the Vermont State Hospital
- New State Government leadership
- Pressures to reduce education costs

Economic

- State budget deficit
- Increased cost of health care
- Increased cost of fuel, electricity and food
- Widening gap between rich and poor

Technological

- Electronic Medical Record (EMR)
- Health Information Exchange (HIE)
- Lack of broadband regionally and State wide

Social

- Increase in prescription drug abuse
- Increase in demand for parent education and support
- Lack of transportation options
- More working poor
- Increased rates of individuals suffering from chronic disease such as obesity and diabetes
- Earlier identification and rise in Autism rates
- Department of Corrections move towards early release of offenders
- Increased stress on family life

Demographic

- Rising need for elder care services - aging population getting much larger
- Decreasing number of younger children
- Increase of deaf and hard of hearing population

Strategic Thrusts

To fulfill our mission and aspirations, NCSS shall focus on the following eight broad goals, which in their totality will enrich the quality of services and reputation of the organization.

Develop an Integrated Health Care Program

Support Northwestern Medical Center (NMC) and other community health providers to implement the Blueprint and to create an integrated health service system for the citizens of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.

- Medical Home Model where services are organized more effectively and Behavioral Health Services are integrated within practice settings
- Assist in the implementation of the Behavioral Health component of the Blueprint
- Connecting to the integrated data exchange between the agency and other existing health care provider systems
- Conceptualize a medical services plan for the Blueprint
- Implement the 340-B pharmacy program in partnership with the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)
- Modify NCSS practices to meet health care reform needs
- Enhance psychiatry consultation services provided to Northwestern Medical Center and primary care providers



Systems Restructuring

Work with state government to restructure the service delivery system, to make it more efficient and effective, and to document the effectiveness of the system to the external community.

Health Care Reform

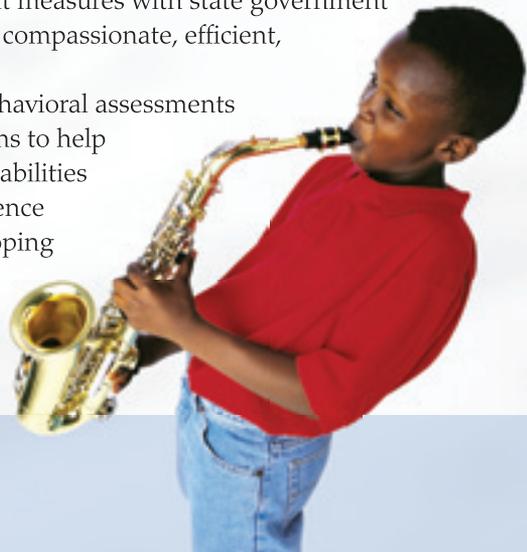
- Reduce high emergency room utilization
- Collaborate with the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) to reduce pharmaceutical costs and address unmet medical needs
- Fully implement the Children's Integration Services (CIS) program
- Develop an alternative model to address waiting lists
- Describe and develop crisis outreach capacity
- Develop an Enhanced Family Services Program for children and youth who require complicated or intensive services

Interagency Collaboration

- Work with Creative Workforce Solutions and Vocational Rehabilitation to enhance employment placement rate
- Participate in statewide Adult Re-Design initiative
- Expand collaboration with correctional system to provide extensive community support for offender population
- Develop a contingency plan for the 1-800 crisis line initiative
- Develop a school and community consultation model for children with autism and children with serious behavioral needs
- Create an educational program for adults with developmental disabilities

Program Quality Enhancement

- Develop outcomes management measures with state government to demonstrate our services are compassionate, efficient, effective and responsive
- Develop capacity to perform behavioral assessments
- Develop alternative living options to help persons with developmental disabilities move toward greater independence
- Explore the possibility of developing a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Residential Level III home
- Restructure documentation systems



Organizational Learning & Staff Development

Develop staff and managers to provide high quality services.

- Conduct an internal review of current clinical expertise and identify areas in need of additional training and supports
- Evaluate the administrative and clinical managerial skill level of our team leaders
- Make NCSS an “internship destination” to increase our service and research capacity
- Remote training options for agency employees

Branding

Improve NCSS message and image within the community at large.

- Expand branding capacity into all forms of media and communication
- Logo redesign - Resolve use of name and / or acronym to capitalize on our position in the community
- Website & Social Media - Relaunch NCSS website that’s easier to navigate and more interactive. Test use of social media sites as marketing tools
- Community Trainings (i.e. Grand Rounds / Mental Health First Aid) - Build on established community training offerings to inform and educate
- STIGMA Initiative - Continue to address stigma, not only during National Mental Health Awareness Month (May), but throughout the year by increasing Mental Health First Aid awareness
- Visibility expansion in rural areas (especially Grand Isle County, Richford and Enosburg)



Expand Prevention Programs

Implement prevention programs to improve the well-being of individuals within our community.

- Offer the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training Program for NCSS staff to increase the number of trainers for the program
- Offer MHFA on a yearly basis to Franklin and Grand Isle communities
- Modify the MHFA curriculum to accommodate those with disabilities
- Develop a peer mentor certification program for persons with disabilities
- Enhance our health and wellness capability by offering MHFA, Grand Rounds and other health and wellness offerings
- Create summer camp opportunities for children of all abilities
- Develop a variety of clinical groups
- Utilize Soar Learning Center to develop an outdoor/experiential adventure therapy program
- Develop a suicide prevention strategy for the community at large, including the implementation of a suicide survivors group

Criminal Justice Program

Develop a Criminal Justice Program across NCSS Divisions by implementing the Sequential Intercept Model.



Evidence-Based Practices

Develop a process for reviewing, implementing and evaluating evidence-based practices for all three service divisions such as:

- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Illness Management and Recovery
- Trauma Informed Treatment
- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Wrap Around Services
- Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS)

Major Capital Investment Initiatives

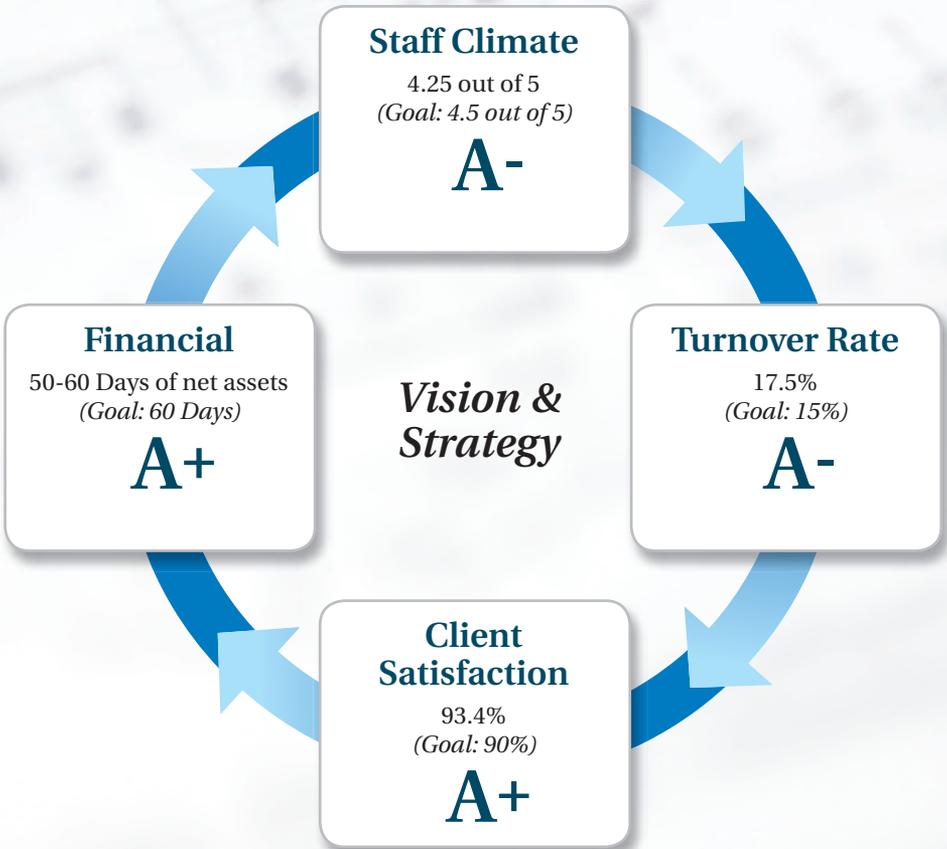
Critical investments to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the NCSS service delivery system.

- Soar Learning Center Capital Improvement Plan
- Enterprise Payroll System
- Expense Software
- Electronic Medical Record
- Security System
- Websense Software



Balanced Scorecard

The balanced scorecard is a management system that enables our agency to clarify our vision and strategy and translate them into action. It provides feedback around both the internal business processes and external outcomes in order to continuously improve strategic performance and results. The balanced scorecard provides a clear prescription as to what our agency should measure in order to “balance” the financial perspective with other very important outcome perspectives.



Creating a **stronger community** *one person at a time.*

Part of creating a stronger community means partnering with other local organizations and striving to meet the highest quality service standards. This is why NCSS is proud to be affiliated with the United Way, CARF accredited, and among the great organizations that comprise the Center for Health & Wellness.

The Franklin-Grand Isle United Way is a voluntary human services organization focused on building community resources and problem solving. With its volunteer Board of Directors made up of a diverse group of nearly 20 local citizens, it works to see that much-needed health and human service programs are delivered efficiently and effectively throughout the two county region.

NCSS is proud to say that we are accredited by the international organization known as CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities). CARF accredited programs and services have demonstrated that they substantially meet internationally recognized standards. CARF accreditation means that you can be confident that our organization has made a commitment to continually enhance the quality of its services and programs, and its focus is on consumer satisfaction.

The Center for Health & Wellness (CFHW) is the collaborative partnership of Northwestern Medical Center, Franklin County Home Health Agency, Vermont Department of Health and Northwestern Counseling & Support Services. The mission is to promote wellness and reduce illness, injury and disease in northwestern Vermont. This is addressed by providing education, services and support to help people help themselves live a healthier life.

This is just a sampling of the ways in which we are truly creating a stronger community one person at a time.

NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING

& SUPPORT SERVICES

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NCSS conducts a strategic planning process every 3-5 years. Our review considers the expectations of clients and area stakeholders, the competitive environment, financial opportunities and threats, the organization's capabilities, service area needs and demographics, along with current regulatory and legislative environments. The Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of twenty members, guided the organization through this year-long evaluation, leading to the creation of this report. NCSS values the input of clients, our community, and our staff. Nearly 350 community members have been interviewed for this report in addition to guidance from every team of staff members who conducted their own analysis. Additionally, a wide range of committees and volunteer groups provided input including our board of directors, standing committees, and peer support groups.

NCSS is recognized with the highest level of accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities



Proud to be affiliated with these outstanding organizations



Franklin-Grand Isle
United Way

