

Client Orientation Guide

we're here for you



**NORTHWESTERN
COUNSELING**
& SUPPORT SERVICES

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***In the event of a mental health crisis, please call
(802) 524-6554 or toll free 1-800-834-7793,
then press 1.***

Vermont 2-1-1

Vermont 2-1-1 is the number to dial to find out about hundreds of important community resources, like emergency food and shelter, disability services, counseling, senior services, health care, child care, drug and alcohol programs, legal assistance, transportation agencies, educational and volunteer opportunities, and much more.

2-1-1 is your first step toward solving everyday problems or when you are facing difficult times. It's a free service. It's confidential. It's 24/7.

Dial 211 or 1-866-652-4636 – toll free in Vermont

Client Orientation Guide Overview

This Consumer Orientation Guide was created to help you become familiar with the programs, practices and services of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS). More detailed information regarding specific agency policies and practices is available for your review upon request.

We have listed some topics we want to bring to your attention as you consider receiving services from NCSS. You will also learn more about our procedures as you meet with various staff. Useful information is available in brochures or handouts in our waiting area, and your provider may also give you other information and educational materials during treatment.

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN THIS GUIDE

Throughout this orientation guide we will use the general term “service provider” to refer to the various staff providing the treatment and support services. The term refers to physicians, clinicians, or counselors when discussing professionals offering services.

***WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ASK QUESTIONS.
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AS NEEDED.***

Mission

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.

Vision

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS) welcome all citizens to join us in cultivating a partnership with Franklin and Grand Isle Counties and with the surrounding communities. We affirm our commitment to offer consumer directed services that are available and open to all.

We embrace the role of a health care leader in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties and commit ourselves to positive outcomes to promote growth and learning. Northwestern Counseling & Support Services acknowledge that people are our community/s most important asset as we challenge ourselves to build the faith and trust of those we serve.

Values

- Safety
- Responsiveness
- Compassion
- Integrity

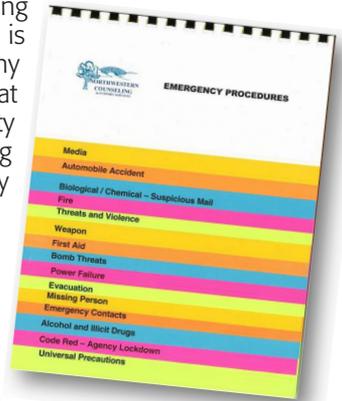
If you have questions, need a translator or interpreter regarding this guide contact Kim McClellan at (802) 524-6554 or kim.mcclellan@ncssinc.org.

Health & Safety

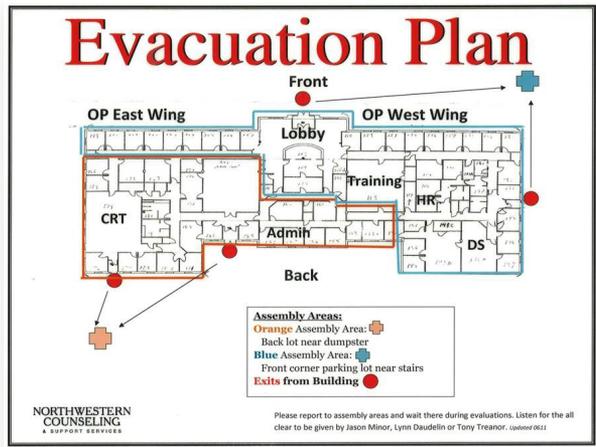
- **Safety is our number one value**
- **No tobacco**
- **No weapons**
- **No illegal/illicit drugs**

In supporting the health and well-being of persons served, Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Inc. (NCSS) is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment. To that end, we have the following safety policies regarding the following substances on any property owned or leased by NCSS.

1. The use of tobacco products is prohibited on NCSS campuses.
2. Possession of weapons, such as firearms, knives, etc. is prohibited.
3. Possession of illegal or illicit drugs, and/or prescription medications not belonging to the individual is prohibited.



NCSS has an active Health & Safety Program and while you are on NCSS property you are encouraged to take notice of Emergency Procedure booklets and evacuation routes. In the event of an emergency, including a threat by person on Agency property, we will use Agency protocols to ensure safety of consumers and staff until emergency first responders arrive.



For more information about our emergency procedures and safety protocol contact our health and safety officer @ (802) 524-6554.

Our emergency procedure for an active threat by a person is called ALICE. ALICE is a model implemented throughout the country by law enforcement, education, medical providers, and other businesses to address a safety response to an armed intruder event.



ALICE[®]
TRAINING INSTITUTE

ALERT
Initial Alert may be a gunshot, PA announcement, etc...
Avoid code words.

LOCKDOWN
If Evacuation is not a safe option, barricade entry points.
Prepare to Evacuate or Counter if needed.

INFORM
Communicate real time information on shooter location.
Use clear and direct language using any communication means possible.

COUNTER
As a last resort, distract shooters ability to shoot accurately.
Move toward exits while making noise, throwing objects,
or adults swarm shooter.

EVACUATE
Run from danger when safe to do so using non-traditional exits if necessary. Rallying point should be predetermined.

AliceTraining.com

The safety of you and our employees is our number one value.

- **It is your right to receive treatment**
- **You make decisions about your care**
- **Ask for an interpreter**
- **Ask for a translator**
- **Staff follow Code of Ethics**
- **You consent to your treatment**
- **Treated with respect and dignity**
- **Request specific types of treatment**
- **Refuse treatment**
- **Ask questions**
- **Ask for accommodations**
- **Receive services unique to you**

Client Care

Non-Violent Practices

NCSS as an agency does not use seclusion and restraint. NCSS does allow designated physical holds ONLY as a last resort and when less restrictive interventions have failed or would be ineffective in preventing imminent danger to self or others. NCSS staff, volunteers, and interns are committed to ensuring the welfare, safety, and security to persons served by consistently providing a positive behavioral approach and use of verbal intervention and de-escalation strategies.

Care Coordination

Care coordination is the intentional sharing of information with identified supports in your life to provide you the best care possible. It is important to speak with individuals who work within and outside of NCSS to ensure we are supporting your overall wellness, including mental & physical health and social well-being. Without this communication we can miss important information that may slow down progress or may be duplicating supports you are receiving from another provider. We will co-create goals as the foundation for our care coordination efforts. You will be at the center of your care.

Care coordination is individualized and can support you with referral and services, physical health, employment, education, community connections, housing and food safety.

Transition Planning and Discharge from Care

At the beginning of your care, your treatment team will work with you on a transition plan that ensures coordination of supports during and after services at the agency. This includes your accomplishments, progress towards well-being and identifies support systems that assist you in your continued care and supports. The transition planning process is person-centered and is individualized to meet your needs during and after your supports and services. This plan will help you and your team determine when services are no longer needed and a discharge plan can be created.

Medication Management

1. A NCSS psychiatrist is available for consultation 24 hours a day 7 days a week
2. The administration and handling of prescription and non-prescription medication as well as controlled substances will conform to all Vermont and Federal Laws and regulations. Facilities and/or programs must first adhere to medication and controlled substances related policies mandated by individual Licensing Boards
3. NCSS uses treatment guidelines and protocols that promote state-of-the art prescribing
4. As appropriate, ongoing training and education regarding medications is provided to
 - a. Persons served
 - b. Individuals and family members identified by the person served, when applicable
 - c. To personnel providing direct service to the person served.
5. Any staff person (other than those with medical licensure) assigned the responsibility of medication supervision will first receive in-service training.

Trauma Informed Care

“Trauma is defined by the experience of the survivor. Two people could undergo the same event with differing effects. One person might be traumatized while the other remains relatively unscathed. What is traumatic about an event will differ from one individual to the next. You cannot assume that the significance or details of events will cause the same experience of distress in different individuals.” (Risking Connections)

Trauma informed care is a strengths based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment (Hopper, Bassuk, and Olivety, 2010)

Providing care in a trauma-informed manner includes using principles and practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing to increase overall health and

- **Ask about your progress and condition**
- **Ask about your medications**
- **Receive and request additional information**
- **Request help with treatment and medication**
- **Be notified of appointment changes**
- **Voice or file a complaint**
- **Receive support for accessing additional services**
- **Ask for help with your bill**
- **Request private phone calls or letters**

- **Your records kept confidential**
- **Request information about eligibility**
- **Terminate services**
- **Be courteous and respectful to others**
- **Be on time**
- **Cancel 24 hours in advance**
- **Be honest in your treatment**
- **Participate in your treatment**
- **Ask questions**
- **Inform NCSS of changes**
- **Pay for services you receive**

wellbeing.

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services strives to reflect the 4 R's of trauma-informed care at all levels of our agency:

1. Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
 - We make sure our staff knows that many of our clients may have experienced one or more traumatic events and that healing is possible.
2. Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
 - Staff are trained to see the signs of possible traumatic experiences in someone's past.
3. Respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
 - We use the knowledge we have about the impact of trauma to guide the services we provide.
4. Seeks to actively Resist re-traumatization.
 - We strive to build a safe community that is sensitive to each individual's unique needs for healing.

What Are My Rights?

NCSS shall protect and promote your rights, including each of the following rights:

1. To exercise basic civil and legal rights as persons served by NCSS and as a citizen or resident of the United States.
2. To be supported in exercising your rights except where limited by a decision of the court.
3. To exercise control over your own actions, decisions, wishes and desires as any other person of comparable age, and not be subjected to rules or regulations that are excessive or inappropriate.
4. To expect all NCSS staff to adhere to the NCSS Code of Ethics.
5. To have these rights and policies communicated in a way that is understandable to you.
6. To communicate in your primary language and primary mode of communications.

7. To ask questions about anything not understood.
8. To attend, speak at, and have guests of your choosing at all meetings at which placement, treatment and services decision are made on your behalf.
9. To be informed of your condition and progress.
10. To be provided with information to facilitate decision-making.
11. To participate in all aspects of your treatment plan.
12. To be informed of possible side effects of medication or treatment offered.
13. To consent to, refuse treatment to the extent permitted by law, and to be informed of possible consequences of such actions.
14. To request help in the form of treatment and/or medication. Even if you request help, you still have the right to refuse the help offered and the right to refuse treatment or medication previously accepted.
15. To receive treatment, rehabilitation and/or educational services according to commonly accepted professional standards regardless of race, creed, gender, age, national origin, political belief, disability, sexual orientation or infectious disease.
16. To be treated with respect and dignity, including humane psychological and physical treatment, rehabilitation and/or educational environment that is sensitive to social, psychological, physical and spiritual factors; as well as freedom from physical, sexual and verbal abuse or harassment and physical punishment, financial or other exploitation, humiliation or neglect.
17. To endure the least restrictive conditions necessary to achieve the purpose of treatment or rehabilitation, including crisis procedures and special treatment interventions and restrictions. (See NCSS Policy and Procedure on Non-Violent Practices.)
18. To freedom from aversive procedures, devices and treatments.
19. To petition the court for review of any civil commitment order in accordance with the provisions of the law.
20. Not to be the subject of experimental research without the expressed and informed consent of you and/or your guardian. If consent is given, research will adhere to all NCSS, professional and governmental regulations. You and/or your guardian may withdraw consent at anytime. (See NCSS Policy and Procedure on Human Subject Research.)
21. To receive services in a manner responsive to your unique characteristics, needs and abilities.
22. To request reasonable accommodations for special needs
23. To be notified as far in advance as possible should appointments need to be rescheduled.

- **No weapons**
- **Attend appointments drug/alcohol free**
- **Information about you will be kept private**
- **You give NCSS permission to share your information in writing**
- **We need to know if you have a guardian**
- **With a child, we need to know custody arrangements**

24. To voice or file a complaint or grievance, request re-assignment to a different service provider, if necessary; to recommend changes in policies or exercise of a legal right without fear of retaliation or punishment; to receive due process with regard to the complaint/grievance.
25. To receive support for accessing and referral to guardians and conservators, self-help groups, advocacy services and legal services as appropriate.
26. To an examination and full explanation of your bill regardless of the source of payment.
27. To associate with individuals of both genders.
28. To appropriate arrangements to meet your need for privacy and safety.
29. To communicate in private by mail and telephone.
30. To have information in your medical records handled in a professional and confidential manner.
31. To have written and electronic records kept confidential, except for disclosure as required by law. Release of information will be in accordance with NCSS policies on privacy and confidentiality. (See NCSS Policy and Procedure on Confidentiality and NCSS Notice of Privacy Practices.)
32. To receive services in the context of support necessary for a family member with a developmental disability without relinquishing custody of a child or children except when custody is terminated in accordance with Vermont law. Persons served who are committed to the Department because they present a major danger to public safety may experience some restriction to these rights.
33. To maintain family contact, except when contact is restricted by court order.
34. To refuse to perform services for NCSS.
35. To agree to perform voluntary or paid services for NCSS if you desire, if there is no medical reason which would contradict the performing of the services, and if compensation for paid services is at or above prevailing rates.
36. To examine the results of the most recent survey of NCSS conducted by Federal or Vermont surveyors or private accreditation firm and any plan of

correction in effect with respect to NCSS.

37. To receive information about eligibility criteria and funding priorities, available services, programs and practitioners; practice guidelines; utilization management practices.
38. To terminate services, except where services are required by court order.

What Are My Responsibilities?

As a consumer of the programs at NCSS you have the responsibility to...

1. Be courteous to other clients and staff;
2. Be on time for all appointments and cancel 24 hours in advance;
3. Report to the reception desk upon arrival for appointments;
4. To respect the rights of others including their confidentiality;
5. Discuss yourself/family/children's (as appropriate) symptoms and problems with your service provider as honestly and as completely as possible;
6. Participate fully in the decisions regarding the services that you receive;
7. Follow the service and support plans that you agree upon with NCSS staff;
8. Ask questions about any aspect of your treatment that you do not agree with or understand;
9. Learn more about NCSS programs, practices, procedures and policies so you can make the best use of the services that are available;
10. Keep NCSS informed of any changes in your personal situation such as, address, phone numbers, insurance or income information;
11. Pay for services as you receive them; notify NCSS of any insurance changes. Some providers are not covered by all insurances and you could then be responsible for payment. In certain cases you may need to change providers.

- **We will provide information for Disability Determination**

- **We will NOT make a decision for Disability Determination**

- **We will refer you to your doctor if you ONLY need medications**

- **We will help you find other treatment if legal services are unavoidable**

12. Inform your service provider, community support provider, or case manager if you wish to discontinue your therapy sessions;
13. Not carry any weapons onto NCSS property or engage in threatening behavior;
14. Attend all appointments alcohol and drug free.

Employee & Significant Other(s) Use of NCSS Clinical Services

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Inc. (NCSS) recognizes that the provision of clinical services to an employee, the employee's immediate family, members of the employee's household, or other significant persons in the employee's life may create conflicts of interest. The intention of Human Resources policy # 127 is to avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest between the provision of mental health services and employee functions, in accordance with professional and ethical standards.

When NCSS becomes aware that an employee or an employee's significant other(s) are receiving NCSS clinical services, a timely clinically appropriate decision will be made regarding the continuation or transition of said services, consistent with good clinical practice. NCSS will intervene in mental health emergencies involving employees and/or their significant others until a determination is made for when a transfer of care to another provider is clinically appropriate. All NCSS staff are held to the same confidentiality and professional standards.

Confidentiality of Information & Limitations

All information pertaining to your services will be held strictly confidential. We are careful to protect all client/consumer information gathered in the course of registration, evaluation and treatment as required by law. Only service providers directly involved in providing care or individuals authorized to transcribe, file or manage records will have access to your information.

Before any information is released to anyone, you must specifically consent in writing to authorize NCSS to disclose records or verbal communication to a specific person or organization for a specific reason.

There are exceptions that involve special circumstances, such as if you were to demonstrate an immediate danger to yourself or other people. It would be necessary for NCSS to override confidentiality and respond to the extent that information was directly relevant to such a situation. Also, records could be ordered released by the courts, in which case, NCSS would involve legal counsel to safeguard confidentiality to the extent possible under the law.

Custody/Guardianship

In such situations where the custody/guardianship status is unclear, the consumer/client will provide NCSS with all relevant information at the time of the initiation of services (i.e. current copy of the court order or any section of the decree that pertains to the custody and/or guardianship agreement), and make NCSS aware of any changes in legal status that subsequently occurs.

Disability Determination

If you are seeking a determination regarding eligibility for disability, NCSS will send copies of your record with the proper authorizations signed. NCSS is a treatment provider and does not make a determination or evaluate for the appropriateness of disability benefits.

Pharmacology

Psychotropic medications are most effective when prescribed as part of a comprehensive package of clinical supports. To support this clinical model, NCSS provides medications only to individuals who are concurrently receiving additional therapeutic supports from NCSS. If either you or your provider(s) determine that medications is the only service required through NCSS, you will have 60 days to coordinate transfer of your care to your Primary Care Physician (PCP). If you need assistance doing this, we can help you.

Court Testimony

NCSS provides “treatment” services. With the exception of court screenings and guardianship evaluations, NCSS does not provide legal evaluation services for the courts or other legal entities. It is the practice of NCSS to avoid involvement in referrals where our role as a treatment provider can be misrepresented to the courts as a legal evaluation services related to ongoing legal matters. In instances where there is a current custody dispute or other legal action which could interfere with appropriate treatment, NCSS may: 1) suggest other service providers rather than scheduling an initial appointment; 2) make a referral to another provider when it becomes known during the course of treatment that such legal circumstances will interfere with the therapeutic relationship.

In the event that NCSS is unable to avoid involvement in a legal matter, it is our practice to charge the client, or legal guardian directly for services that are the result of the legal process which are typically not covered by insurance.

These services could include, but are not limited to:

1. Time for developing a fee agreement with a client’s attorney
2. Time for developing a treatment summary
3. Time for consultation with a client’s attorney or other counsel
4. Time for court testimony and/or depositions

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services

Notice of Privacy Practices

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information.

Please review it carefully.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact our Privacy Officer at (802) 524-6554.

WHO WILL FOLLOW THIS NOTICE

This notice describes our practices and that of:

- Any health care professional authorized to enter information into your health record.
- All divisions and programs of the Agency.
- Any volunteer we allow to help you while you are receiving services from the Agency.
- All employees, staff and other personnel.
- All Agency entities, sites and locations follow the terms of this notice. Staff members at these entities, sites and locations may share health information with each other for treatment, payment or operations purposes as described in this notice.

OUR PLEDGE REGARDING HEALTH INFORMATION

We understand that health information about you and your health is personal. We are committed to protecting your privacy and health information about you. We create a record of the care and services you receive at the Agency. We need this record to provide you with quality care and to comply with certain legal requirements. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by the Agency, whether made by Agency personnel or your personal doctor. Your personal doctor may have different policies or notices regarding the doctor's use and disclosure of your health information created in the doctor's office or clinic.

This notice will tell you about the ways in which we may use and disclose health information about you. We also describe your rights and certain obligations we have regarding the use and disclosure of health information.

We are required by law to:

- Make sure that health information that identifies you is kept private;
- Give you this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to health information about you;
- Follow the terms of the notice that is currently in effect;
- Notify you following a breach of unsecured protected health information; and
- Comply with any state law that is more stringent or provides you greater rights than this notice.

HOW WE MAY USE AND DISCLOSE HEALTH INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

The following categories describe different ways that we use and disclose health information. For each category of uses or disclosures we will explain what we mean and try to give some examples. Not every use or disclosure in a category will be listed.

For Treatment. We may use or disclose health information about you to provide you with treatment or services. This includes the potential sharing of information about you to doctors, nurses, clinicians, case managers, interns or other Agency personnel, or to people outside of the Agency who are involved in your care. For example, a clinician might be treating you for a mental health problem and need to talk with one of our psychiatrists, another clinician, who has specialized training in a particular area of care. We may also disclose information about you to people outside the Agency who are involved in your health care.

Electronic Exchange of Your Health Information-In some instances, we may transfer health information about you electronically to other health care providers who are providing you treatment or to the insurance plan providing payment for your treatment. Your health information may also be made available through the Vermont Health Information Exchange (“VHIE”). The VHIE is a health information network operated by VITL, Inc. and your treating health care providers may only access your health information through the VHIE if you have provided specific written consent for their access, unless you are in need of emergency treatment. For information about the VHIE, see www.vitl.net.”

For Payment. We may use and disclose health information about you so that the treatment and services you receive at the Agency may be approved by, billed to, and payment collected from a third party such as an insurance company. For example, we may need to give your health plan information about counseling you received at the Agency so your health plan will pay us or reimburse you for a counseling session. We may also tell your health plan about a treatment you are going to receive to obtain prior approval or to determine whether your plan will cover the service / treatment.

For Health Care Operations. We may use and disclose health information about you for Agency operations. These uses and disclosures are necessary to run the Agency and make sure that all individuals receiving services from us receive quality care. For example, we may use health information to review our treatment and services and to evaluate the performance of our staff in serving you. We may also combine health information about many consumers to decide what additional services we should offer, what services are not needed, and whether certain new treatments are effective. We may also disclose information to doctors, nurses, clinicians, case managers, interns and other Agency personnel for review and learning purposes.

We may also combine the health information we have with health information from other mental health agencies to compare how we are doing and see where we can make improvements in the services we offer. We will remove information that identifies you from this set of health information so others may use it to study health care and health care delivery without learning who the specific consumers are.

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS) is a Vermont designated Community Mental Health Agency and is obligated under our contracts with various departments within the Vermont Agency of Human Services to provide certain services. As a result, these Departments may access health information related to these contracted services for the purpose of obtaining treatment for clients, making payment or for its health care operations. NCSS contracts and participates in one or more Accountable Care Organization (ACO) which assists it in evaluating and coordinating care to patients.

Appointment Reminders. We may use and disclose information to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment.

Alternative Treatment and Benefits and Services. We may use and disclose information about you in order to obtain and recommend to you other treatment options and available services as well as other health-related benefits or services.

Fundraising Activities. Should the need arise where information about you or where your participation is desired for the Agency's fundraising activities, the Agency would obtain your authorization. No information would be released for this purpose without your authorization.

Research. Under extremely limited circumstances, we may use and disclose health information for research purposes. For example, a research project may involve comparing the health and recovery of all consumers who received one medication to those who received another, for the same condition. All research projects are subject to a special approval process. This process evaluates a proposed research project and its use of health information, trying to balance the research needs with consumer's need for privacy of their health information. Before we use or disclose health information for research, the project will have been approved through this research approval process. We may, however,

disclose health information about you to people preparing to conduct a research project; for example, to help them look for consumers with specific health needs, so long as the health information they review does not leave the Agency. We will always ask for your specific permission if the researcher will have access to your name, address or other information that reveals who you are, or will be involved in your care at the Agency.

As Required by Law. We will disclose health information about you when required to do so by federal, state or local law. In Vermont, this would include: victims of child abuse; the abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable adults; or where a child under the age of sixteen is a victim of a crime; and firearm-related injuries. Under certain circumstances, the Departments within the Vermont Agency of Human Services who we contract with are mandated to access health information in order to carry out their responsibilities. We are required to disclose your health information to you and to anyone you request by written authorization to receive it.

To Avert a Serious and Imminent Threat to Health or Safety. We may use and disclose health information about you when necessary to prevent a serious and imminent threat to your health and safety or a serious risk of danger to an identifiable person or group of persons. Any disclosure, however, would only be to someone reasonably believed to be able to help prevent the threat.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Military and Veterans. If you are a member of the armed forces, we may release health information about you as required by military command authorities.

Workers' Compensation. We may release health information about you as authorized for workers' compensation or similar programs as authorized by Vermont law. These programs provide benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses.

Public Health Risks. We may disclose health information about you for public health activities. These activities generally include the following:

- To prevent or control disease, injury or disability;
- To report deaths;
- To report child abuse or neglect;
- To report abuse, neglect or exploitation of vulnerable adults; any suspicion of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of the elderly (age 60 or older), or a disabled adult with a diagnosed physical or mental impairment, must be reported;
- To report reactions to medications or problems with products;
- To notify individuals of recalls of products they may be using;
- To notify an individual who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a communicable disease or condition

Health Oversight Activities. We may disclose health information to a health

oversight agency, such as the Vermont Agency of Human Services Departments who we contract with, for activities authorized by law. These oversight activities include, but are not limited to, audits, investigations, inspections, and licensure. These activities are necessary for the government to monitor the health care system, government programs, and compliance with civil rights laws. We may disclose health information about you without your permission to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and/or Office of Civil Rights when they are conducting a compliance review, investigation or enforcement action or for a mandatory report of a health information breach.

Law Enforcement. We may disclose your health information to law enforcement officials as required by law or to comply with a court order or search warrant. We may also disclose limited information to law enforcement officials to report a crime committed on our premises or for identifying a missing person or a suspect to assist in a criminal investigation.

Legal Proceedings and Disputes. If you are involved in a lawsuit or a dispute, we may disclose health information about you in response to a court or administrative order.

Public Health Officials and Funeral Home Directors. We may release information to a coroner or medical examiner. This may be necessary, for example, to identify a deceased person or determine the cause of death. We may also release health information to funeral directors thereby permitting them to carry out their duties.

Individuals in Custody. If you are an inmate of a correctional institution or under the custody of a law enforcement official, we may release health information about you to the correctional institution or law enforcement official pertaining to care provided while you are in custody. This release would be necessary (1) for the institution to provide you with health care; (2) to protect your health and safety or the health and safety of others; or (3) for the safety and security of the correctional institution.

USES OF HEALTH INFORMATION REQUIRING WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION

Other uses and disclosures of health information not covered by this notice **or the laws that apply to us** will be made only with your written authorization. Examples of this may include disclosures to lawyers, employers, the Vermont Office of Disability Determination Services or others who you know, but who are not involved in your care. Additionally, uses and disclosures of protected health information for our fundraising activities, marketing purposes, and disclosures that constitute a sale of protected health information require authorization. Also, Psychotherapy notes maintained by your treating provider can only be disclosed with your written authorization. If you provide us permission to use or disclose health information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any

time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose health information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the services that we provided to you.

Community Health Teams / Community Care Collaboratives: These teams were created under the Vermont Blueprint for Health and are designed to create alliances between healthcare providers, local and state agencies and community support organizations who are committed to improving quality of life through coordination of services. These services may be financial, physical, emotional or educational in nature. Your treating health care providers may only share your health information with a CHT / CCC if you have provided specific written consent for sharing.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

Any assistance (physical, communicative, etc.) you need to exercise your rights will be provided to you by the Agency.

You have the following rights regarding information we maintain about you:

Right to Review and Copy. You have the right to review and copy health information that may be used to make decisions about your care. This may include both health and billing records. We must respond to your request within thirty days of our receipt of your request unless we notify you in writing during this period of reasons that delay our response. If so, we may take up to an additional thirty days or a total of sixty days from our receipt of your request to respond to it.

To review and copy health information that may be used to make decisions about you, you must submit your request in writing to our Records Department. If you request a copy of the information, we may charge a reasonable, cost-based fee for copying, mailing, or supplies associated with your request. If you seek an electronic copy in a specific form or format of any portion of your health record, and the Agency is unable to readily produce the copy in that form or format, we will work with you to provide an alternative form or format for the electronic copy.

We may deny or limit access to your request to inspect and copy only in certain very limited circumstances. Should you be denied or provided only limited access to your health information because it was determined that permitting you access might endanger or substantially harm you or another person, you may request that the decision be reviewed. The Agency will choose a different health care professional to review your request and the denial. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.

Right to Amend. If you feel that health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to

- **You can file a complaint with any NCSS staff member**
- **You have a right to file a grievance without retaliation**
- **You can ask any NCSS staff member for information on how to file a grievance or appeal**

request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for the Agency.

To request an amendment, your request must be made in writing and submitted to our Records Department. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request.

We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support that request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:

- Was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;
- Is not part of the designated record set kept by or for the Agency;
- Is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect and copy; or,
- Was determined accurate or complete by the Agency.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures. You have the right to request an “accounting of disclosures.” This is a list of the disclosures we made of health information about you which were required by law and/or were not authorized by you. The list of disclosures will not include disclosures made for the purposes of treatment, payment for treatment services or health care operations related to the treatment services.

To request this list or accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to our Records Department. Your request must state a time period, which may not be longer than six years. Your request should indicate in what form you want the list (for example, on paper, electronically). The first list you request within a 12-month period will be free. For additional lists, we may charge you for the costs of providing the list. We will notify you of the cost involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time before any costs are incurred.

Right to Request Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the health information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. We are not required to agree to your request unless your request is to limit disclosures to a health plan for the purpose of carrying out payment or

health care operations that are not otherwise required by law and you or someone on your behalf other than your health plan has paid for those services in full at the time the health services are provided. However, if we do agree with a requested restriction or limitation, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you emergency treatment.

You also have the right to request a limit on the health information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member. For example, you could ask that we not use or disclose information about a counseling session you received.

To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to our Records Department. In your request, you must tell us (1) what information you want to limit; (2) whether you want to limit our use, disclosure or both; and (3) to whom you want the limits to apply, for example, disclosures to your spouse.

Right to Request Confidential Communications.

You have the right to request that we communicate with you about health matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work or by mail. To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to our Records Department. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.

Right to a Paper Copy of This Notice. You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of the current notice at any time. To obtain a paper copy of this notice, contact the Agency Privacy Officer at (802) 524-6554.

Security of Health Information.

We have in place appropriate safeguards to protect and secure the confidentiality of your health information. Due to the nature of community based human service practices, Agency representatives may possess your health information outside of the Agency. In these cases, Agency representatives will ensure the security and confidentiality of the information in a manner that meets Agency policy, State and Federal Law.

- **Provides directions for your care when you cannot**
- **Ask questions if you are unsure about your relationship with your treatment provider**
- **Treatment providers must keep their licensing, education and work experience up-to-date**

Specific requirements for electronic notice: *A covered entity that maintains a web site that provides information about the covered entity's customer services or benefits must prominently post its notice on the web site and make the notice available electronically through the web site.*

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE

We reserve the right to change this notice. We reserve the right to make the revised or changed notice effective for health information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. We will post a copy of the current notice in all Agency facilities. The notice will contain an effective date. Should we make a material change to this notice, we will, prior to the change taking effect, publish an announcement of the change at every Agency facility.

COMPLAINTS

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the Agency or with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. To file a complaint with the Agency, call (802) 524-6554 and ask to speak with our Privacy Officer. All complaints must be submitted in writing. Complaint forms are available at each location including the reception area at the Agency's main office. You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.

The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services can be contacted through their regional office at Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Government Center, J.F. Kennedy Federal Building – Room 1875, Boston, Massachusetts 02203, voice phone (800) 368 1019, fax (617) 565-3809, TDD (800) 537 7697.

If you need help understanding NCSS' Notice of Privacy Practices please contact the Privacy Officer at (802) 524-6554

Consumer Complaint, Grievance & Appeal Procedure

Under Vermont's Global Commitment to Health, the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) has established a process for you to resolve problems about your mental health care and developmental services. For example, you might not like the quality of your services, you might be dissatisfied because your treatment or service team changes the kind or amount of services you receive, or you might tell your case coordinator that another staff member was rude to you.

Northwestern Counseling & Support Services has a Grievance and Appeal Coordinator and the staff at NCSS will help you understand how the process

works. If you need help filing your grievance or appeal or understanding the process, the staff will assist you.

Complaints:

- A consumer expresses dissatisfaction about aspects of interpersonal relations – rudeness, failure to be respected, staff not conducting themselves properly or the quality of care the consumer receive.
- The complaint is resolved in one response by staff.
- Complaints may be made orally or in writing by the consumer to any NCSS staff.

Grievance and Appeals:

There may come a time when you are not satisfied with your services and want to take steps to address your concerns. You may do so in a formal or informal manner. To address your concerns informally, you could talk to NCSS the Director of Quality & Risk Management or any staff member about a complaint you have. If you are not satisfied with the NCSS response, you can then file a formal grievance or appeal. The definitions below will help you understand the difference between a grievance and an appeal.

Grievance Examples May Include:

- Dissatisfaction with a staff/contractor
- Dissatisfaction with management
- Dissatisfaction with program decision
- Dissatisfaction with policy decision
- Dissatisfaction with quality of services
- Dissatisfaction with accessibility of services
- Dissatisfaction with services not offered or not available

Appeal Examples May Include:

- Denial, in whole or in part, of payment for a service
- Failure to provide services in a timely manner
- Failure to provide clinically indicated covered services
- Denial of request for covered services outside Medicaid network

The full Grievance and Appeal Mental Health and Developmental Services process is given to each person upon intake and given to each NCSS consumer when their treatment plan is updated or their ISA review is done. Additional copies can be located in the reception area.

Vermont Office of Professional Regulation

Vermont Secretary of State Office of Professional Regulation is responsible for the licensing and oversight of clinical mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, psychoanalysts, psychologists, social workers, rostered Nonlicensed and non-certified mental health counselors. Included in the oversight, there are statutory regulations of unprofessional conduct for each profession. A copy can be obtained from Office of Professional regulation or from the follow:

Rostered Nonlicensed and Non-Certified Psychotherapists:

- 3 V.S.A. § 129a - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/03/005>
- 26 V.S.A. § 4093 - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/26/078>

Clinical Mental Health Counselors:

- 3 V.S.A. § 129a - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/03/005>
- 26 V.S.A. § 3271 - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/26/065/03271>

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist:

- 3 V.S.A. § 129a - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/03/005>
- 26 V.S.A. § 4042 - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/26/076/04042>

Psychologist:

- 3 V.S.A. § 129a - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/fullchapter/03/005>
- 26 V.S.A. § 3016 - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/26/055/03016>

Psychoanalyst:

- 26 V.S.A. § 4062 - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/26/077/04062>

Social Worker:

- 26 V.S.A. § 3210 - <http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/26/061/03210>

Licensed Behavior Analysts:

- 26 V.S.A. § 4928 - <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/26/095/04928>

If a person believes a licensed professional may have committed unprofessional conduct, the OPR will investigate the complaint and take action when necessary to protect the public. Consumers who have inquiries or wish to obtain a form to register

a complaint may do so by calling (802) 828-1505, or by writing to the Director of the Office, Secretary of the State's Office, 89 Main Street, 3rd Floor, Montpelier, VT 05620-3402 or online at <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/professional-regulation.aspx>

If you need help understanding the Consumer Complaint, Grievance and Appeal Procedure or the unprofessional conduct, please ask to speak to Kim McClellan at (802) 524-6554

Advance Directives

Vermont's Advance Directive Law establishes a number of obligations for healthcare providers. Generally, the law requires that providers attempt to determine whether a consumer, 18 years or older, has an Advance Directive before they provide care to that individual. If the consumer does have an Advance Directive and it is in effect, providers and facilities are required to follow the instructions of the person, whether agent or guardian, who has the authority to make decisions for the consumer, or the instructions in the Advance Directive unless the law provides for an exception. In order to ensure that providers implement their obligations they are required to have protocols in place that are consistent with their obligations under the law.

POLICY:

To ensure that persons served are provided information about individual rights to issue advance medical directives.

DEFINITIONS:

1. **ADVANCE DIRECTIVE:** A written statement that gives directions for your medical care if you become unable or unwilling to speak for yourself.
2. **AGENT:** The person named in your Advance Directive to make medical decisions for you, if that becomes necessary.
3. **DURABLE POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR HEALTH CARE:** An older form of Advance Directive that allows you to appoint another person (your agent) to make medical care decisions for you if you become unable to make your own decisions.
4. **LIVING WILL OR TERMINAL CARE DOCUMENT:** An older form of the Advance Directive that states you do not want extraordinary measures used to prolong your life if you are terminally ill.
5. **VERMONT ADVANCE DIRECTIVES REGISTRY:** More information about Advance Directives along with the Vermont Advance Directives Registry can be obtained by visiting: <http://www.healthvermont.gov/vadr/>

NCSS' Expectations of Your Provider

Professional Conduct and "Boundaries"

The term "boundaries" refers to the separation between actions that are generally considered appropriate within a professional helping relationship and other personal life relationships. NCSS staff are expected to act ethically and to recognize and avoid any conduct that compromises the professional helping relationship.

Sometimes situations come up that are not obvious and easy to recognize as being a potential problem. Just as we advise staff to discuss with their supervisor any situation that raises any question or doubt about appropriate staff conduct, we advise everyone receiving services to "ask questions" if you encounter any situation with staff that makes you feel uncomfortable. We stress the importance of you feeling OK about bringing staff conduct to the attention of a supervisor or other management.

Our intent is to keep the focus of attention entirely on your treatment goals and reasons for coming to this agency, and to provide you with quality professional services that avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation as possible. Here are a few examples of conduct guidelines:

- Staff is advised to avoid physical contact with people they are providing services except in instances when physical assistance is necessary. Even an intended "comforting" hug or hand on the shoulder can be misinterpreted.
- A professional "helping" relationship is not the basis for forming a personal relationship. Staff may not engage in personal relations with people receiving services from them. Staff is advised to disclose and review with their supervisor any "personal" situations or circumstances that arise to avoid potential problems or misunderstandings.
- It is not appropriate for staff to disclose personal information or focus on their own life circumstances within the counseling or support relationship. This does not mean occasional reference to relevant personal experiences. It is not appropriate for staff to engage in activities other than casual conversation when they encounter people served in public. This means that staff should not discuss "therapy" issues or engage in social activities in public or other circumstances. Staff is expected not to accept or give gifts or personal favors with people they serve, or to purchase, sell, lend or borrow. This includes staff's family as well.

Professional Qualifications

We keep up-to-date information about the qualifications and work experience of each of our professional staff for review by anyone using NCSS Services upon request.

For more information call our compliance officer at (802) 524-6554.

Behavioral Health Services Programs

**To Access Services,
Call (802) 524-6554**

Emergency and Crisis Stabilization Services

Services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency and crisis stabilization. Emergency Services are for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis requiring immediate attention.

To reach Crisis Services, call: (802) 524-6554, press 1 or toll free at 1-800-834-7793.

Walk-In Crisis Services

Immediate access for individuals experiencing acute symptoms who need assistance, screening and referral, Monday - Friday 9:00AM - 5:00PM

Rapid Access

To decrease length of wait time to be seen, we offer assessment and brief treatment options, which could be individual or group options.

Bay View Crisis Care Center

A crisis stabilization service for adults designed to prevent hospitalization or to ease transition back into the community from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization. The Bay View program is located in a comfortable and supportive environment with staff available 24-hours a day and includes two crisis beds and other community based supports.

Mobile Outreach Team

The Mobile Outreach Team works closely with our crisis team to provide additional support and follow-up for adults served in crisis. The team also provides short-term case management services. Specialized outreach services are also provided through embedded positions at Northwestern Medical Center's Emergency Department and law enforcement agencies.

Survivors of Suicide Group

Have you lost a loved one to suicide? This is a free and confidential group that meets monthly in St. Albans. Everyone in the group, including its facilitators, has had someone close to them take their life and knows how devastating this experience can be. You can just come and listen to others share what they are going through and how they are coping, or you can share your own story. The choice is always yours to do what feels best to you. For more information, call (802) 393-6503.

Outpatient Services

Outpatient services are offered to adults and families who would like support for life stressors and substance use concerns. Groups are also offered to enhance healthy and effective coping skills.

- Office-Based Psychotherapy Services which include individual, couples, family and group counseling
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) program for teens and adults
- Elder Outreach Services (collaboration with Champlain Valley Agency on Aging and Franklin County Home Health Agency)
- Reach-Up provider who sees individuals at Reach-Up office and outpatient location
- Psychiatric Evaluations, Pharmacology and Consultation Services
- Co-Occurring Counseling (Substance Use and Other Disorders)
- Court Ordered Guardianship Evaluations
- Short Term Case Management Services
- Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)
- Seeking Safety Group for adults

Integrated Health Services

Our Integrated Health Services range from improved coordination with medical providers to innovative programming in medical settings. We have Social Work Care Coordinators on the regional Blueprint for Health Team, which involves direct support in both primary care practices and specialty care practices. We also have a partnership with our region's Federally Qualified Health Center, Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH). We continue to develop our partnership with Northwestern Medical Center through a variety of services and planning efforts.

NCSS recently took on the coordination of the Health Service Area's Blueprint for Health Self-Management Workshops. These include: WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning); Healthier Living with Chronic Disease; Healthier Living with Chronic Pain; Healthier Living with Diabetes; Diabetes Prevention Program, and Fresh Start (tobacco cessation).

Integrated Health Services include, but are not limited to:

- Health Assessment and Screenings
- Short-Term Therapy
- Developing Strategies to Manage Conditions which include Goal Setting to Improve Personal Health, Symptoms Management of Anxiety and Depression, Nutrition Counseling, Tobacco Cessation, identify mental health barriers to meet health care goals, Coping, Relaxing and Managing Self-Care Strategies

- Understanding Benefits
- Care Coordination with other Agencies/Providers in the Community
- Guidance for Healthier Living
- Specialty Referrals to Outside Resources as Needed
- Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)

Psychiatry & Nursing Services

NCSS provides evaluations and consultations to all three NCSS direct service divisions (Behavioral Health, Children, Youth & Family Services and Developmental Services) in addition to community health providers, such as Primary Care Providers and area nursing homes. This allows NCSS to maximize its psychiatric resources across Franklin & Grand Isle Counties. Our psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioner provide services to children, adolescents, and adults. Our nursing staff provides support to the Psychiatry Team and coordinates needs with persons served and within the medical community. Nursing also works closely with our Crisis and Mobile Outreach services, and CRT programs.

- Evaluations of patients referred from within the Agency and one-time consultations for Primary Care Providers
- Medication management, lab work and coordination with Medical Providers
- Consultation Services to Primary Care Providers, Northwestern Medical Center, skilled nursing facilities and the Soar Learning Center
- Referrals and coordination with Primary Care Providers (PCP's) and other medical specialists

Pharmacology

Psychotropic medications are most effective when prescribed as part of a comprehensive package of clinical supports. To support this clinical practice, NCSS provides ongoing medication management to individuals who are concurrently receiving additional therapeutic supports from NCSS. If either you or your provider(s) determine that medication management is the only service required, you will need to transfer your care to your PCP or a private psychiatrist. *If you need assistance with this process, we can help.*

• **You have a right to appeal if you disagree with ineligibility**

• **You have up to 30 days from notice to request an appeal**

• **First Step: Internal review at NCSS**

• **Second Step: DMH Hearing**

- **14 days to request NCSS Grievance & Appeal Coordinator for DMH Appeal**
- **Request a Fair Hearing within 30 days of final appeal decision**
- **At any time you can request a Fair Hearing**
- **NCSS must provide services if a Fair Hearing determines you are eligible for services**

Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) Services

The CRT program offers a range of services to individuals who experience severe mental illness. All individuals enrolled in the program have been determined to meet specific eligibility criteria determined by the Department of Mental Health standards. The CRT program is welcoming to individuals who have both mental health and substance abuse concerns. Services are strength based, recovery oriented, client centered and provided in various community settings.

Community Support Program (CSP)

The Community Support Program (CSP) provides case management services focusing on community integration and rehabilitation of individuals with a history of severe mental illness. CSP provides skill training, service coordination, residential support, advocacy and linkage to other community resources.

Intensive Case Management (ICM)

Intensive Case Management (ICM) provides individualized team based case management and community support services that help individuals remain in the community. The ICM team provides medication assistance through the delivery of medications. Delivery schedules vary from weekly to twice daily, based on the treatment needs of the individual.

Supported Employment Services

The CRT Supported Employment team offers employment services to individuals enrolled in CRT who desire to work regardless of diagnosis, living situation, substance use, work history or any other circumstance. The Employment Team actively supports consumers to identify, develop and achieve their individual employment goals. The team supports individuals with Supported Employment by utilizing the evidence based Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS).

Outreach and Peer Services

This service is available to individuals with severe mental illness who might not otherwise be engaged in services. Outreach provides the linkage between the person served and the clinic that might not be feasible through traditional means and often involves peer support by individuals in recovery.

Therapeutic Residence & Transitional Housing

The Therapeutic Community Residence is a licensed program with five beds, which provides 24-hour supervision and support for adults with a history of hospitalization for psychiatric illness. The Transitional Housing Residence is a six bed supported community residential program providing transitional subsidized housing and support for homeless individuals enrolled in the CRT program. Both residences are welcoming to individuals with substance use issues.

Supported Independent Living Program/Community Recovery Program

The Supported Independent Living Program (SILP) and Community Recovery Program (CRP) are 2 bed intensive programs, providing 24-hour supervision to individuals with severe mental illness and a history of inpatient psychiatric hospitalizations. SILP/CRP provides a supportive environment, assisting with independent living skills, behavioral intervention, and provides strength-based education with the goal of recovery and successful transition into independent living.

Evidence-Based Practices

The Behavioral Health Division (BH) is continually supporting staff in developing skills to provide Evidence-Based Practices. The Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) program is integrated with our outpatient program. Wellness Self Management is offered in several settings. The Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS) is offered through our employment services. Co-occurring assessments and service planning is integrated throughout the program. Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP) is offered to CRT and the broader community. Other evidenced based and promising practices include: Collaborative Assessment & Management of Suicidality (CAMS), Seeking Safety, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia.

CRT Program Ineligibility Notice and Rights to Appeal

This notice informs you of your treatment rights if you disagree with the planned services in your individualized service plan.

Individuals eligible for CRT program services experience major mental illness, significant impairments in social and living skills and require intensive treatment and support services in the community. The core services for Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT) program include an array of rehabilitation, emergency, case management and community support services. These services are provided directly or contracted for by the community mental health center (also called the Designated Agency) providers. Services are provided to eligible individuals through an individualized service plan that is based on an assessment of consumer need, clinical appropriateness, and consumer choice.

You have the following rights available to you if you disagree with this determination: If you are denied CRT Program services and believe that you are

eligible for them, you have the right to request an appeal. You have up to 30 days from the date of this notice to request an appeal. If you request an appeal after 30 days, the agency may or may not choose to consider your appeal.

- Your appeal must be resolved within 45 days unless you agree to an extension of no more than 14 additional days to resolve the issue.
- The first step of the appeal process is an internal review at NCSS which will take up to 15 days.
- If the appeal is not resolved during the internal review, the second step is DMH hearing the appeal of NCSS's internal review.
- The consumer has 14 days to request the NCSS Grievance and Appeal Coordinator if they want their appeal to continue at DMH.
- You must request a Fair Hearing within 30 days of your final appeal decision from the community mental health center. If you request an appeal after 30 days, your rights to appeal may be affected.
- At any point during the DA internal appeal process or DMH appeal or if you disagree with the progress of the process, you may also request a Fair Hearing.
- If your appeal goes to a Fair Hearing and you are found eligible for CRT Program Services, the Division of Mental Health through the local community mental health center or designated agency must provide CRT program services.

If you need more information about appeals or assistance in asking for an appeal, you can contact the following people or agencies that can help:

- The Grievance and Appeals Coordinator at the local community mental health center or designated agency at (802) 524-6554
- The Grievance and Appeals Coordinator at the Division of Mental Health at 1-802-241-0090, or for the State of Vermont only, call our toll-free number at: 1-888-212-4677, TTY Relay Service at 1-800-253-0191, or by mail to Department of Mental Health, Redstone Building, 26 Terrace Street, Montpelier, Vt. 05609-1101
- Office of Health Care Ombudsman at 1-800-917-7787 or by mail to PO Box 1367, 264 N. Winooski Avenue, Burlington, Vermont 05402
- Vermont Protection and Advocacy at 1-802-229-1355 or by mail to 141 Main Street, Suite 7, Montpelier, VT 05602
- Vermont Psychiatric Survivors at 1-800-564-2106 or by mail to 1 Scale Avenue, Suite 52, Rutland, VT 05701

***To Request a Fair Hearing at any time, write to:
Human Services Board, 118 State Street, Drawer 20,
Montpelier, VT 05602***

Children, Youth & Family Services Programs

**To Access Services,
Call (802) 524-6554**

Emergency and Crisis Stabilization Services

Services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency and crisis stabilization. Emergency Services are for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis requiring immediate attention.

To reach Crisis Services, call: (802) 524-6554, press 1 or toll free at 1-800-834-7793.

Transportation & Grouping

Clients will be transported by staff to access community for treatment and may be paired with other clients when deemed appropriate for social skill building activities. Providers will discuss with parent/guardian these circumstances when they apply.

Family/Community Support Services

Family Assessment

Family Assessment Specialists provide assessment, information, referral and support to families in need. Specialists act as intake clinicians and orient children and families to services within NCSS as well as the larger community.

Children, Youth & Family (CYF) Outpatient

CYF's outpatient clinician's provide therapy services to children ages 0 – adolescence/young adults. Treatment frameworks used include:

- Parent Child Interaction Therapy
- Child Parent Psychotherapy
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Rapid Access Clinician Position

New Connections

New Connections offers 24-hour support to families with children experiencing a behavioral crisis or who are at risk of, or currently a run-away. Emergency family mediation, planning for stability and de-escalation support is offered. Emergency respite may be offered based on need. Please contact our crisis line to access support: (802) 524-6554.

Family Support

The Family Support team provides support to caregivers around safe and effective parenting, case coordination, and resources. Family Support Specialists may also provide support to children and adolescents in the home setting or in the community to improve family functioning. Services are intended to provide support for families where safety is a concern, where children or adolescents display emotional or behavioral problems, or where extra support is indicated. Families with identified high risk factors are prioritized.

Truancy Program

The Franklin Grand Isle Restorative Justice Center, local schools, the Family Services Division, and the Indian Education Program have partnered with NCSS to support the Truancy Program. Our Truancy Specialist works with the family and referring school to identify potential solutions to increase consistent school attendance. The program is designed to work with students kindergarten through 8th grade. Referrals come from the child's educational team.

Children, Youth & Family (CYF) Services Resource Team

The CYF Resource Team serves children up to the age of 22 who have been diagnosed with a developmental delay/disability. We provide individualized case management support as well as help parents develop strategies to better care for their child and to access appropriate resources. We work closely with families, schools, DCF, therapists, medical personnel, camps (other programs), and PCA's to support advocacy and treatment planning for each individual. Our Children's Resource Team also provides preparation for adulthood by collaborating with adult programming. This can include support with guardianship, SSI, post secondary education, employment, peer support, along with referrals for appropriate needed evaluations.

Applied Behavior Services

The Applied Behavior Services team of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services provides treatment both in home, onsite, and within the community setting to children of all ages diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Delay, and/or Intellectual Disabilities as well as any child who would benefit from Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). This team adheres to best practices and ethical guidelines of ABA.

Community-Based Services

Community Support

Community Support is designed to support children with severe emotional disturbances across all environments. Individual Plans of Care are developed and modified to meet changing needs. The goal-focused program includes service coordination and direct support in the home and community.

Intensive Community Support

Intensive Community Support (ICS) is designed to support children with acute clinical mental health needs. Comprehensive treatment plans are developed with families and community partners with the goal of increasing skills necessary to provide stability within their home community. Services include direct support in the community and home, along with service coordination.

High Fidelity Wrap

The High Fidelity Wrap is comprehensive programming including professional and non-professional team members, with the primary objective to prevent unnecessary out-of-community placements for children and youth. The program provides an intensive community treatment option that addresses complex clinical needs, supervision struggles, and stabilization during moments of acute crises. Providing transition services out of residential programming, with a focus on family engagement, identification of strengths and needs, practicing skills and readiness to re-acclimate to home and community supports the goal of shorter out-of-community placements when needed.

Respite Services

A treatment and support service available for children and families who are experiencing stress. Respite provides the child and family with a break which offers 20-25 awake hours per month of care from an agency respite provider. Staffed respite is typically a planned support service.

Camp Rainbow

Camp Rainbow is a day camp for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or another developmental disability. Camp Rainbow is structured to have "theme day" activities addressing five core areas: sensory exploration, fine/gross motor skills, communication skills, academic skills and social skills.

Camp Rainbow for children, held within the community at Soar Learning Center during the summer, is designed to help children improve and maintain essential skills when school is not in session. The vision of Camp Rainbow is to provide a fun, stimulating and creative summer camp experience designed to refresh and strengthen behavioral, communication, social and academic skills;

preparing children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other developmental disability for a successful school year.

Camp Rainbow's Parent Retreat

Camp Rainbow's Parent Retreat is an opportunity for parents of participants of Camp Rainbow to get together in a casual setting to meet other parents, share experiences and gather resource information annually. The parents' retreat also offers a day at camp for siblings of children who are attending camp.

Soar Learning Center

Soar Learning Center is approved by Vermont's Agency of Education as an independent school and is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) as a day treatment program. The program provides comprehensive academic, special education, behavioral, and clinical services to children and adolescents in grades K – 12. Soar Learning Center is part of the Children, Youth, and Family division at Northwestern Counseling & Support Services.

The primary goal of the program is to provide students with the academic, social, and interpersonal skills necessary to be successful in a traditional school setting and in their community. It achieves this through a multidisciplinary team of teachers, special educators, behavior interventionists, instructional assistants, home/school coordinators, and clinicians working together to foster a safe and supportive culture of learning and personal growth.

School hours are from 7:45 AM to 2:30 PM Monday through Thursday and 7:45 AM to noon on Friday. Soar Learning Center also provides transportation services, social skills/wellness groups, vocational education and on-site pharmacotherapy.

In addition to the 180-day school calendar, Soar Learning Center provides an extended school year (ESY) program in July that is designed to maintain or enhance the academic and socio-emotional gains achieved by students. In addition to the experiential learning activities provided during the extended school year, high school students are also offered the opportunity to participate in vocational training program that includes job placement and training, as well as the prospect of earning wages.

The school offers an Agency of Education endorsed high school diploma and can also arrange for students to obtain a high school diploma from their public schools while still attending and graduating from Soar Learning Center.

School-Based Services

Collaborative Achievement Team (C.A.T.)

The Collaborative Achievement Team (CAT) provides 1:1 Behavior Interventionists (BIs) to support meaningful and positive change in children who struggle with social, emotional and behavioral challenges in the public school setting. The CAT program is based on a system of behavior change rooted in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA is a therapeutic intervention based on scientifically established principles of learning and behavior to improve socially significant behavior. The principles and methods of ABA can benefit many kinds of learners to acquire different skills from positive interactions with peers to self advocacy.

Behavior change procedures are individualized to fit each child's needs and include a strength-based positive approach. The program provides daily behavioral support, skill instruction, external controls, reinforcement service coordination & advocacy for student goals to help maximize student functioning. It is the goal of the program to provide the child with direct intensive support to achieve skills and behaviors necessary for self-sufficiency and success within their prospective school setting.

School-Based Clinical Program

Clinicians and home/school coordinators offer an array of services for a variety of mental health issues. These include diagnostic assessment, treatment planning, therapy, home/school coordination and crisis intervention/screening. Consultation and collaboration with school staff and outside providers are vital components of this program. The school-based clinical team also serves as a referral conduit to connect students and families to other NCSS programs. The specific service model may look a bit different according to the needs of each participating school.

School-Based Behavior Consultation Program

The School-Based Behavior Consultation Program focuses on building sustainable systems within local public schools to address student behavioral needs and foster positive school culture. A master's-level clinician overseen by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst is embedded within each school served by the program. These staff work with school faculty to build or enhance school-wide behavior systems, as well as to structure specific interventions for students who need an individualized level of support but do not require a level of service similar to that provided by the Collaborative Achievement Team. School-Based Behavior Consultants maintain a small caseload of around ten students for whom they design and monitor individualized behavior plans, while simultaneously partnering with school faculty to address more broad, school-wide priorities. The School-Based Behavior Consultation Program is another way NCSS strives to partner with local schools to help provide the best possible level of support to students and families in our community.

School-Based Autism Program

The School Based Autism Program assists local community schools in providing effective, strength-based interventions with individualized programming for students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Genetic Disorders, and/or Down Syndrome. The program supports schools, students, and their families by providing a trained Behavior Interventionist to work one-on-one with identified children, with Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and Autism Specialists developing all behavior programming and providing supervision and ongoing training. Additionally, Behavior Analysts and Autism Specialists provide support to many schools through a consultative model. The program tenets are based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), along with other evidence-based practices. The program provides a family-centered and strength-based approach to assure teams and students are provided with the treatment and support they need. School teams refer students to the program and the cost is supported by Medicaid and special education funds.

Parent Child Center

Our Parent Child Center programming consists of four core teams, which operate 20 primary prevention programs (Early Intervention, Early Childhood Supports, Early Childhood Resource, Adolescent Services) serving children in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties.

Children's Integrated Services (CIS)

CIS is a statewide prevention and early intervention program that promotes a child's growth and development while supporting families during pregnancy/postpartum and their child's early years. This program provides: Early Intervention, Early Childhood and Family Mental Health, Nursing and Family Support and Specialized Child Care. An interdisciplinary team meets frequently to ensure that supports are well coordinated and that progress towards family-identified goals are being made.

Early Intervention

Early Intervention Services (EI) provides regional early intervention services to families with children birth to age three who have a delay in development or a medical/genetic condition with a high probability of developmental delay. Services are provided in the setting of the family's choice (home, child care, physician's office, playgroup, etc.) and may include speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, as well as coordination of services. Families are connected with the supports and resources needed to meet their child's unique needs through the development of a One Plan.

Early Childhood Support

The Early Childhood Support team strives to help young children and their families meet goals in health, parenting, and education. The team provides services through Early Childhood and Family Mental Health, Parents as Teachers, and Strengthening Families.

Early Childhood and Family Mental Health is primarily a prevention program that provides home visits and mental health consultation to pregnant women, families with children under the age of six, child care providers, and early education teachers. The goal of the services is to ensure families are able to meet identified health, parenting, and education goals, and that children will have social-emotional skills to be successful in the school setting. Services include parenting education, behavioral support, child development information, mental health consultation, and community referrals.

Early Childhood Resource

Early Childhood Resource is a variety of programs that provide support and assistance to families, child care providers and community members. Services include the Child Care Financial Assistance Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Child Care Referral Program, Provider Group Leader Support (Starting Points), Reach Up, and Specialized Child Care.

Family and Community Support Services also offers a Car Seat Fitting Station, which provides education to families and the community around correct usage of car seats and seat belts to protect vehicle passengers. At the fitting station, families can have their car seats checked at no cost and purchase new seats as appropriate at income eligible prices.

Vermont Children & Families Community Response

This is a grant between our Parent Child Center/NCSS and DCF Family Services to work with families who have had brief involvement with child welfare. Families with children under six that have been closed at the assessment or investigation phase (following a report to DCF Central Intake and a determination of a lower risk of harm), can be referred directly to NCSS. Our Early Childhood Specialists will provide short-term services, up to 12-16 weeks, to support families with identifying local resources, case management,

- **DS Crisis #: (802) 393-6688 ask for “NCSS DS~Crisis On-Call worker”**
- **If you have Intellectual Disabilities or Autism you may be eligible for services**
- **Call our intake staff at 524-6554 to find out if you or a family member are eligible for services**

- **You will be told of decisions about whether or not you can get services at NCSS**
- **If you are denied and disagree, you have the right to appeal**
- **If you are approved, you will receive a start date**
- **You will be assigned a case manager and a meeting time**
- **You and your case manager will complete an ISA (Individual Service Agreement)**

financial decision-making assistance and coaching, social capital building, and home visits to increase protective factors in the family. This program follows Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework and hopes to decrease families' future involvement with the child welfare system.

Pregnant and Postpartum Services

NCSS has worked with other community providers at the Vermont Department of Health, Franklin County Home Health, and Northwestern Medical Center to provide a community response to the mental health needs of pregnant and postpartum mothers. We provide counseling in the home to pregnant and postpartum mothers who are experiencing depression, anxiety, and other mental health difficulties. This service uses a framework for Postpartum Support International, including the Edinburgh screening tool, psychoeducational materials for the community, and linking families to additional services such as a local support group.

The HEART Program:

The HEART Program is Helping Everyone Access Resources & Thrive. The program provides Universal home visits, Postpartum doula visits, in-home perinatal mental health counseling, access to Cribs for Kids program, Access to concrete supports funding to help in meeting basic needs of the family, connection to Franklin County Home Health and Vermont Department of Health Programs.

Adolescent Services

NCSS provides an adolescent system of care that blends Mental Health and Substance Abuse services offering seamless, integrated treatment to the communities we serve. Along with individualized service plans, Adolescent Services provides the following interventions:

Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services for Youth 12-22:

Includes comprehensive evaluation, referral and clinical substance abuse and behavioral health treatments for youth who are experiencing concerns with psychoactive substances. NCSS serves as the treatment provider for the Franklin County Juvenile Treatment Court and also has established relationships with area high schools, embedding substance abuse clinicians within the school setting.

Case Management Services for Youth 14-26:

Includes community-based supports to assist youth with successful transition to adulthood. Youth commonly present for employment and housing support and can access a range of services from support with finishing their education; career counseling; job exploration, work-based learning experiences, individual job placement; managing money; getting an apartment; advocacy and connection with area resources; problem solving, and positive coping and social skills training. Youth also have the opportunity to participate in group-based supports through attending various groups with curriculums and topics pertaining to issues faced by youth.

Learning Together for Youth 14-22:

The Learning Together program provides parenting education, employable job skills, independent living skills, and therapeutic support services to pregnant and parenting adolescents under the age of 22. The goal of the program is to decrease subsequent pregnancies among adolescents, and to increase education and employment opportunities. Learning Together works closely and collaboratively with local schools, Vermont Adult Learning, and the Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division. Services are provided through individual case management with home visits and community supports.

Youth In Transition for Youth 14-22:

The Youth In Transition group strives to develop a positive image of youth in Franklin and Grand Isle Counties while raising community support for youth in transition to adulthood. The program aims to have a diverse youth leadership team to host local events geared toward youth voice, developing leadership skills, and forging closer relationships between youth and their communities.

Employment Services:

The Jump On Board for Success (JOBS) program for youth ages 14-22 is a collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation and NCSS. The program provides career counseling, individual job placement, advocacy, problem-solving and social skills training for participants who are experiencing emotional or behavioral difficulties. Staff meets with participants to develop an individualized plan that can include one-on-one meetings with staff and group activities that promote personal growth to increase employment skills. The program emphasizes employment as an essential experience to successfully make the transition to independent living.

Housing Support Services:

The Transitional Living Program (TLP) operates from a grant provided by the Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP). The program is designed to support runaway and homeless youth ages 16-22 with their transition to independent living and adulthood. TLP can help participants with completing their education, finding a job, managing money, gaining independent life skills, and finding an apartment.

The Basic Center Program (BCP) is similar to the TLP program and targets a younger age group (youth under the age of 18). It focuses on providing supports to youth so that they can remain in their community and hopefully stay connected to familial supports.

Developmental Services Programs

**To Access Services,
Call (802) 524-6554**

Crisis ~ Developmental Services On-Call Services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency and crisis stabilization. Emergency Services are for individuals served in Developmental Services experiencing a crisis requiring immediate attention.

***To reach DS- Crisis Services, call:
(802) 393-6688 and ask them to page the
"NCSS – DS Crisis on-call worker."***

Eligibility for Services

The Developmental Services Division serves individuals who have a diagnosis of Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Developmental Services programs are primarily for adults. Unlike the school system, funding for our services is not an entitlement; therefore we at NCSS must work with the client to understand the client's needs and present a funding proposal to the state for approval. Most services are funded through the Vermont Medicaid Waiver Program as administered through the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DIAL).

Our Intake Process

The State of Vermont has identified NCSS as the Designated Agency for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. This means NCSS manages the intake process and service provision for all consumers in Franklin & Grand Isle Counties.

To be eligible for developmental services in Vermont, an individual must meet the state definition of an intellectual disability, which is a full-scale IQ score of 70 or below or have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), in addition to significant deficits in Adaptive Functioning. The Intake

Coordinator will review existing records to make this determination, or if needed, may arrange for a psychological assessment.

Due to the many requests for services each year, the state has prioritized which types of needs will be funded as outlined in the Vermont State System of Care Plan. The current funding priorities include, among others, supports to ensure an adult's health and safety, the public's safety, and support for transition age youth to maintain employment. The State of Vermont has made a commitment to funding the service needs of individuals who, through a Needs Assessment, are determined to meet one of these priorities. If an applicant's situation does not meet one of these funding priorities, they may be placed on the waiting list and/or referred to other community resources. The Needs Assessment also includes a determination of the types of services that the individual needs, including needs in residential support, community support, vocational support. Respite support and service coordination are explored.

Once it is determined a person meets one of the states funding priorities and the types of services needed have been identified, a service or funding proposal is presented to the Local Funding Committee. If the Local Funding Committee authorizes the proposal, it is then presented to the Equity Funding Committee at the state level. Once the Equity Funding Committee has made a final decision, NCSS will notify applicants of the decision. In the event an individual disagrees with the decision on their funding authorization, they have a Right to Appeal. NCSS provides information to all applicants regarding their Right to Appeal.

Upon receiving approval a start date for services is identified. A case manager is assigned and a meeting is arranged to coordinate services. An Individual Service Agreement (ISA) is completed with the case manager for each client. This agreement governs the services funded by the Equity Funding Committee. The ISA must be submitted within 30 days of the funding approval start date. The plans will be reviewed, revised and/or rewritten as clinically appropriate or required by Medicaid guidelines and the Division of Developmental Services and Mental Health Services (DDMHS). Each ISA shall be specific to the strengths, needs, abilities and preferences of the individual served and will involve the person served and their support team.

Adult Services

The Developmental Services Division provides individuals with a variety of services, which are funded through a Medicaid waiver. Services are monitored by Service Coordinators, Team Leaders and Program Managers. The program assists individuals in assessing, through informed choice, services and activities available in the local and surrounding communities.

Camp Rainbow for Adults

Camp Rainbow for Adults offers four fun-filled days to individuals aged 18 and up. Often located on local or scenic water venues, Camp Rainbow for Adults provides opportunities to learn new skills, explore interests, recreate and relax, and socialize with friends.

Therapeutic Community Integration Team

The Therapeutic Community Integration Team works with individuals who have behavioral conditions requiring interventions and support to ensure community and personal safety. In addition, they work with individuals with criminal restrictions in collaboration with the State of Vermont Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole Division. The team helps to implement behavioral treatment programs for individuals having a difficult time managing their emotions. The team uses behavioral support planning and positive protocols to help identify and increase more socially appropriate behaviors within the community.

The Therapeutic Community Integration Team uses research based interventions treatment models, which are provided in a variety of settings, including a 24 hours per day supervised residential model, home providers and independent apartments with supported living. The goal is to increase self-regulation skills and consistently supervise and cue individuals in their natural environments until a less structured model is deemed appropriate by the Therapeutic Community Integration Team.

Clinical Services & Therapy

At NCSS we offer a variety of Clinical Programs in support of the individuals and families we serve:

Individual & Family Counseling

Individual & Family Counseling is provided by therapists skilled in working with people who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. They help people problem solve, manage anger, use their strengths and enjoy life.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Training (DBT)

DBT teaches participants skills to help them communicate how they feel; control their emotions; relieve stress; have good relationships and deal with the past.

Family Life and Sexual Health (FLASH)

FLASH addresses issues such as physical development, promotion of sexual health, prevention of disease, affection, interpersonal relationships, body image and gender roles.

Internship Program

The Internship Program builds a bridge from school to work for graduate and undergraduate students in the Human Services field. Interns provide counseling and support services for people of all ages served by Developmental Services.

Behavior Consultation & Personal Support Planning

The Behavior Consultation and Personal Support Planning is designed to assist individuals who are having a hard time managing their behavior. The DS Clinical Consultation Team are available to help find ways to keep people safe. They help the person and their team to develop a plan to keep the individual safe and ensure their rights are protected.

Community Alternative Consultation Services

NCSS, in collaboration with the Agency of Human Services (AHS) and the State of Vermont Department of Corrections (VTDOC) has established a program to support persons, upon their release from the corrections system, who have been identified by VTDOC as having a Severe Functional Impairment (SFI). We participate in conjunction with VTDOC,

Probation & Parole, local and state inter-agency teams to determine the re-integration planning process. During the re-integration planning process it is determined what type of services the individual is eligible for, such as, Community Rehabilitation and Treatment (CRT); Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); Developmental Services (DS); Choices for Care (CFC) programs currently offered here at NCSS.

If the person is not eligible to participate in the CRT, TBI, DS, CFC programs, and clearly needs support, we will strive towards developing an Individual Services Plan (ISP) prior to their release into our communities. It is our goal to work with the State of Vermont to acquire approval of a supporting budget. Upon approval of the budget, our staff works to deliver the needed services in support of the individuals' successful re-entry into our communities.

Contracted Services Assistance

The DS Division provides contracted services for eligible individuals who wish to spend time in the community with a peer or mentor. These services are person-chosen. We assist individuals to manage these services and educate them in the process of being an employer that hires, maintains and terminates their own staff.

Deaf & Interpreter Services

We take pride in the services provided to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. This program allows us to provide persons with a great connection to the community in which they live and provide them access to a full range of services and programs. Some of the programs offered to deaf and hard of hearing individuals are case management, community supports, counseling, life skills classes, in-home supports with staff fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), shared living services with deaf and hard of hearing home care providers or home care providers fluent in ASL, and The Academy of Learning. We take the time to understand the challenges associated with being deaf and hard of hearing, and in order to provide a full breadth of support, also contract with a variety of community agencies. Our staff is dedicated to helping the individual stay connected to the deaf and hard of hearing world, as well as the local and surrounding communities.

Employment Services

The Employment Services program offers residents of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties support in accessing competitive employment opportunities. Without these supports many residents might not be able to overcome

the employment barriers they encounter. The Employment Services team works to develop relationships with local businesses in an effort to understand their staffing needs, and in turn, help them understand the talent and commitment our clients offer as employees in an appropriate and supportive environment. The Employment Services team explores employment interests with our clients to ensure positive and supportive job matches. In addition, clients receive training in job search skills, interviewing skills and resume writing assistance and support. If needed, on-the-job support and training will be provided in order to enhance client success and employer satisfaction. The Employment Services team helps to support 65-70 people in our communities to stay employed.

Peer Services

Peer Services connects individuals receiving developmental services from NCSS with peer advocates and mentors. The mutual experiences that peers share of living with a disability helps individuals break down barriers and find solutions. Trusting relationships are naturally built based on the premise that, "You don't have to do this alone." Individuals find problem solving with their peers often reduces the need for more intensive services. This shift results in less reliance on services while providing opportunities for individuals to become more self-determined and independent: key components of achieving a fulfilling life.

The Peer Services team offers the following programs or options:

Peer Partnerships

Individuals have the option of inviting a peer advocate to join their developmental services treatment team. Peer advocates help individuals speak up for themselves about their goals and dreams in order to develop a client-directed support plan.

Next Step Self Advocates

Next Step Self Advocates is a peer-managed support group that offers individuals an opportunity to form new relationships and participate in an array of group activities. These include weekly meetings, social events, problem solving exercises, self improvement trainings, leadership conferences, community service, and advocacy initiatives to improve disability awareness and services.

Program for Adaptive & Expressive Arts (PAEA)

The Program for Adaptive & Expressive Arts (PAEA) delivers therapeutic music and art services to clients and members of our community. PAEA

offers an array of classes for all age ranges, such as bell choir & music groups (rock band), private instruments instructions for all ages, music exploration for children two through six years of age, FLASH Curriculum to promote healthy relationships, provide workshops for Cooperative Play to day care providers, professionals and interested parents, as well as art workshops and Instruction, and American Sign Language (ASL) classes.

Respite Services

The Developmental Services division provides respite services for eligible individuals who need additional supports. Respite Services allows caregivers to take time off from caring for an individual on a regular basis. For example, you are the primary provider for an individual who needs around the clock care, however you would like to have one weekend a month off; respite services will help to coordinate this, and an individual will come into your home or pick-up the individual for that weekend. (This is only one example of respite services.) If this is a service you are interested in please contact your Service Coordinator for more information.

Senior Services

Our Senior Program at NCSS provides support to any aging client of Developmental Services who would like to receive specialized services from the Senior's Team. Individuals are assisted in accessing, through informed choice, senior-focused events and services available to them in the local and surrounding communities. The Senior's Team goal is to support our aging clients as well as educate the community about the needs and dreams of individuals with intellectual disabilities. We strive to educate the community by networking with our community partners and service agencies. The Senior's Team specializes in Alzheimer's and dementia care, and also provides Grief and Bereavement Support training to individuals. The Senior Services Team regularly offers groups to support the Senior's involved with Developmental Services. Clients can also participate in other programs within NCSS such as, DS Waiver, Choices for Care, Targeted Case Management, PASARR, and High Tech – Unified Services plans.

Shared Living Services

The Developmental Services Division assists clients in finding safe homes within our communities which are supportive and include caring housemates. Home providers are people living in the community who are passionate about caring for individuals who participate in the developmental services programs. This allows a client to receive care that is needed as well as a comfortable home environment. Currently we

have over 100 partnerships with home providers in our communities.

The Academy of Learning (AOL)

NCSS takes great pride in being an agency that promotes further education and learning for staff and clients alike. That is why NCSS created the Academy of Learning located at 27 Lower Newton Street in St. Albans. The Academy of Learning provides clients with an opportunity to take classes each semester. There is an array of classes offered, and the curriculum is designed in theme days which include Independent Living Skills; Art & Music Appreciation; Health & Wellness; Academics. Enrolled students may select one or more theme days in which they are interested for a full day of activities. Students enjoy the learning environment and have fun socializing with their peers. Classes usually begin at 9:00am and end at approximately 2:15pm. We also provide busing for individuals who may not have transportation, and this is coordinated directly with the Academy of Learning team. It is also strongly encouraged that community members enroll in classes as well.

Traumatic Brain Injury Services (TBI)

The Developmental Service Division developed the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program to teach clients with TBI's the skills they need to live independent and productive lives within their communities among their families and friends.

We have all heard about the severe TBI survivors, the 235,000 that are hospitalized; these statistics included the young person who was driving too fast and slammed a car into a tree; the U.S. soldier whose truck was thrown into a ditch because of a roadside bomb; a young snowboarder, an Olympic hopeful, who fell on his head and found himself in a hospital. Then there are the people who get a bad concussion on the soccer or football field finding themselves suffering from memory loss, bad headaches, unusual angry outbursts, forgetting how to complete common tasks; these are the mild to moderate TBI's, most of which go undiagnosed and untreated and are estimated to affect more than 1.1 million people each year.

The TBI program at NCSS is designed to respond to this need; offering community members case management; rehabilitation services, including daily skills building within the home and community; community support, providing 24-hour care in a multitude of settings; environmental and assistive technology, including communication systems; crisis support assisting in resolving behavioral and/or emotional issues.

Additional Web Resources

***Vermont Department of Mental Health:
www.mentalhealth.vermont.gov***

***Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living:
www.mentalhealth.vermont.gov***

***Vermont Agency of Human Services:
www.humanservices.vermont.gov***

***Advance Directives:
www.vtethicsnetwork.org***

***Vermont Department of Children & Families:
<http://dcf.vermont.gov>***

***Vermont Center for Independent Living:
www.vcil.org***

***Northwestern Medical Center:
www.northwesternmedicalcenter.org***

***Franklin County Home Health Agency:
www.fchha.org***

***Vermont Care Partners:
<http://vermontcarepartners.org>***

***Office of Professional Regulation:
www.sec.state.vt.us/professional-regulation.aspx***

***United Way of Northwest Vermont:
www.unitedwaynwvt.org***

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

Main Office

107 Fisher Pond Rd.,
St. Albans
(802) 524-6554

Academy of Learning

27 Lower Newton St.,
St. Albans
(802) 782-8694

**Satellite Location in
NOTCH Building**

44 Main St.
Richford

Soar Learning Center

178 McGinn Drive
St. Albans Bay
(802) 527-7514

Mapleville Depot

20 Mapleville Depot
St. Albans
(802) 524-6554

**Satellite Location in
NOTCH Building**

8 Industrial Park Rd.,
Alburg
(802) 393-6564

Applied Behavior Center

12 Houghton St.,
St. Albans
(802) 393-6643

**Doctors Office
Commons**

12 Crest Road,
St. Albans
(802) 524-6554

**Satellite Location in
Vermont Adult Learning**

5 Lemnah Dr.,
St. Albans

Ted Mable Family Center

130 Fisher Pond Rd.,
St. Albans
(802) 524-6554



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