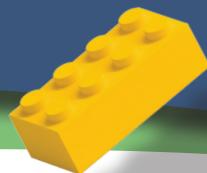


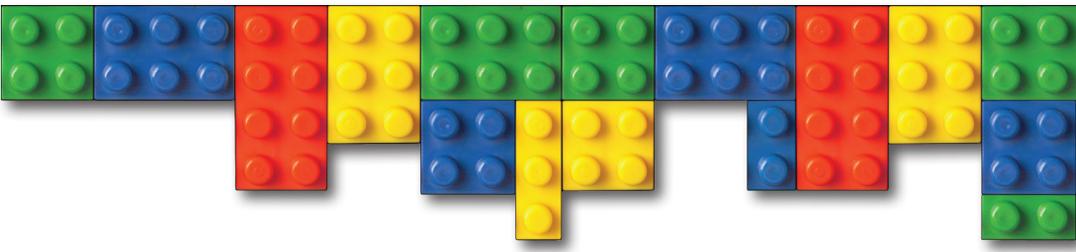
# Strategic Plan 2021 - 2024



*Connecting success*  
**One Piece** *at a time.*



NORTHWESTERN  
COUNSELING  
& SUPPORT SERVICES



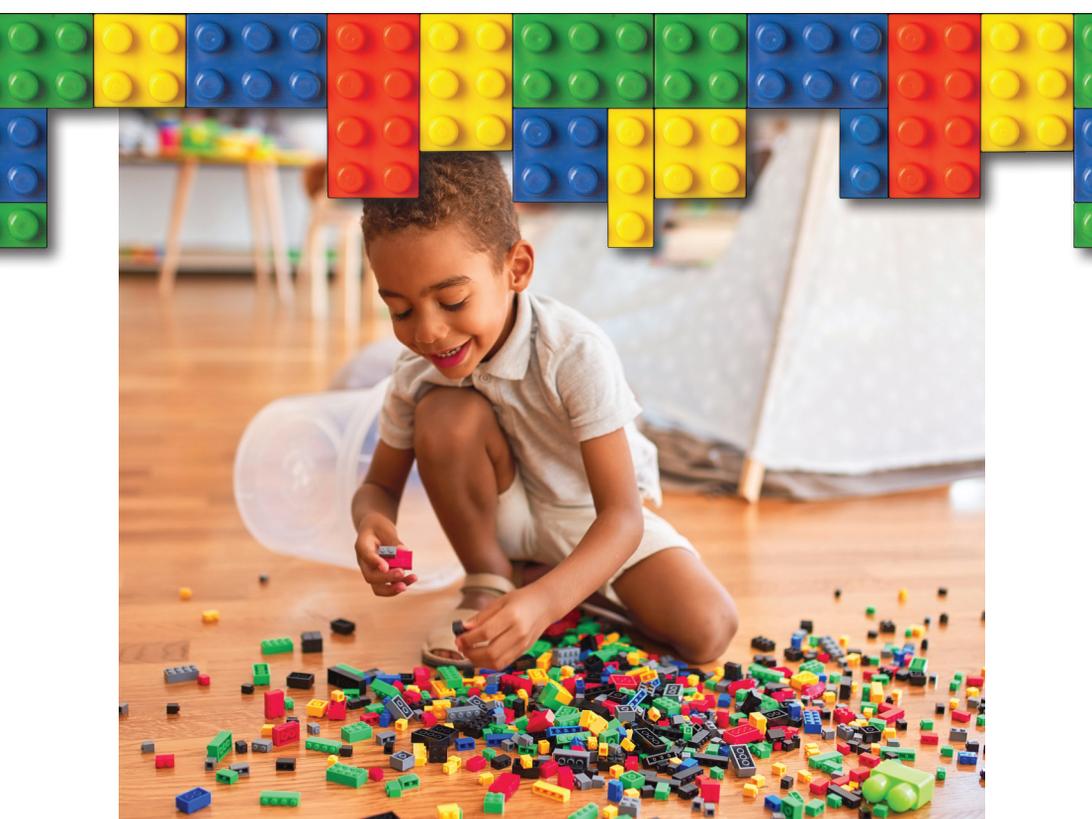
Todd Bauman  
Executive Director

## Our Executive Director's Welcome

*It goes without saying that, we are in the midsts of a global event that will be taught in history classes for generations to come. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on our NCSS team, the people we serve, our families, and our community as a whole. As I connect with people, I have had the privilege of listening to their stories. I have heard stories of challenge, success, worry, and above all, I have heard people talk of an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and strong desire for stability. I share this desire and have woven this theme throughout our NCSS 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan.*

*During these uncertain times, creating a shared vision and working to accomplish a common mission moves us forward together, beyond simply the sum of what any one of us can accomplish alone. The development of this strategic plan has reinforced our belief in both the strength each employee brings to Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Inc. (NCSS) and the critical role of partnerships and collaboration.*

*This strategic plan provides a roadmap to services that our community needs by expanding, strengthening, and collaborating through innovation to improve the quality of care to person's served in an efficient manner. In addition, informing stakeholders as to the breadth of services that we provide and how NCSS is truly the fabric of the community will be paramount over the next three years.*



*The plan contains objectives and strategies committing us to high quality services, recruiting and retaining a quality workforce, the well-being of our staff and the people that we serve, having the resources to adapt to changing needs, and using data to inform decisions and highlight the value that NCSS brings to the community.*

*NCSS unites our community by providing services and programs that promote healthy living and emotional well-being. We invite you to review this strategic plan and how NCSS fits into our local system of care by **Connecting success One Piece at a time.***

*What sets NCSS apart is our commitment to quality, our belief in the importance of education and training, our ability to develop innovative programming, our passion for collaboration, and most importantly our committed and dedicated staff. NCSS has distinguished itself as a quality organization committed to creating a stronger community for Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, one person at a time.*

## Our **Mission** *Statement* *clearly defines why we exist and guides our development:*

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

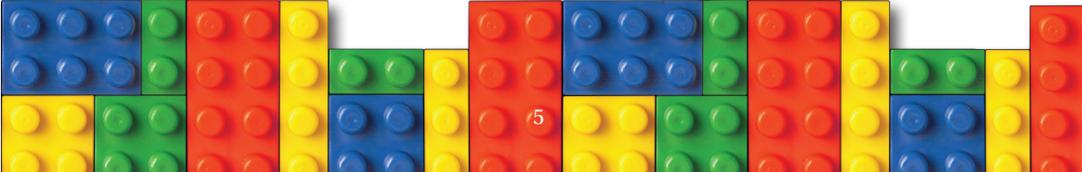
## Our **Values** *provide* *a foundation and anchors our decision making:*

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

## Our **Organizational** *commitments* *reflect our quality:*

- 1 A commitment to providing the **highest quality** services in Vermont.
- 2 An abiding **concern for the well-being** of our clients and a commitment to improving their lives through counseling and support.
- 3 Honoring that quality services, require **quality staff**. NCSS will invest in our NCSS Team through onboarding, education, training, and supports.
- 4 Development of **innovative programming** based on **evidence-based practices** to address community and individual needs.
- 5 Actively adapt our behaviors to see and accept the **diversity and culture** of our client, staff, and community as we persevere in being an equitable and inclusive organization.





# Strategic Plan Accomplishments

## 2017 - 2020

- 1 Developed a model of employment that includes creative work schedule or job sharing
- 2 Identified education support programs with reimbursement and loan repayment options to retain skilled staff
- 3 Identified specific interests, skills, passions within our staff and found opportunities to develop those skills in a way that aligns with the agency vision
- 4 Created an incentive program to support staff with licensure supervision and advanced training
- 5 Hired additional therapists trained in specialties including: Applied Behavioral Analysis, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Trauma Informed Care, Integrated Health, etc.
- 6 Enhanced work/life balance and healthy workforce efforts to further create a safe, positive environment, which includes expanding staff wellness, diversity and recognition programs
- 7 Expanded Trauma Informed Care Initiative
- 8 Worked with Vermont Care Partners, ACO – Vermont Care Organization and local community partners on defining 'Care Coordination' to reduce duplication of services
- 9 Supported the process and implementation of a unified EHR within the Designated Agencies
- 10 Developed wellness and healthy lifestyle activities that we can weave into our programs
- 11 Formalized current working partnerships
- 12 Enhanced and expanded working partnerships with the Federally Qualified Health Centers in our two counties
- 13 Explored new partnerships in our health ecosystem
- 14 Expanded school partnerships to promote a culture of wellness across the school population
- 15 Developed new school partnerships that are aligned with local school and Agency of Education goals
- 16 Created new welcome signs at each site that are diverse to all populations served
- 17 Provided education, training and information to community partners on the services we provide, the models of care, and the populations we serve
- 18 Collaborated with Vermont Care Partners and the other Designated Agencies to have a unified branding approach
- 19 Enhanced presence on social media and communication to educate and raise awareness of NCSS programs and services
- 20 Being an active member in the Vermont Care Partners Center of Excellence pilot



# S.W.O.T. Summary

## Strengths

- NCSS serves a wide range of populations to meet the diverse needs of the community
- The agency prioritizes safety and wellness of clients/staff and is flexible with the needs of staff
- Administration provides a welcoming environment, prioritizes inclusion and responsiveness to clients and staff
- Strong community collaboration, integration, and partnerships
- Leadership is accessible and thoughts and ideas can be carried forward to fruition
- NCSS employs and supports development of staff with a diverse set of skills, talents and clinical experience that provides accommodations for clients by implementing supplemental approaches to traditional modalities
- NCSS provides a positive environment that employs committed and reliable staff
- There is constant collaboration within each team and across teams
- NCSS is committed to providing the highest quality, person centered care through fostering independence and meeting people where they are at
- NCSS has mental health providers integrated within various environments in the community which fosters strong collaboration and partnerships
- NCSS is innovative in developing specialized programming across divisions to help meet the needs of the community
- NCSS is adaptable to the changes of the system and funding streams

## Weaknesses

- More training & program specific supports as we work with clients with higher acuity
- Retention, high rate of turnover- tied back to training
- Communication
- Outdated technology with limited EMR access in rural areas. Some workflows are still paper based.





## Weaknesses *Continued*

- Direct service: access to support, large case load, lack of community resources
- Elderly resources
- Transportation resources and needs
- Crisis and residential placement availability
- LGBTQ resources
- Program specific training: not enough training
- Geographic area rural area- can often be a barrier
- Funding: threat to funding what can and cannot be billed
- Employees not knowing what services we provide across the board

## Opportunities

- Combat STIGMA of mental illness
- Developing services for transitioning youths
- Diversification of our funding teams
- Collaborating with community partners
- Expanding training in racial equality and equity and inclusion
- Leverage technology
- Access to services i.e. telehealth
- Communication
- Developing new services to meet population needs (*older Vermonters, transitioning youth, etc.*)
- Promoting healthy lifestyle

## Threats

- Staff retention/turnover
- Quality of care concerns/staffing patterns
- Access to care
- Facility/Building Issues
- Lack of awareness of NCSS programming within and outside the agency
- Financial threats/Funding streams
- Safety concerns

# Key Objectives & Initiatives

## 2021 - 2024

### Provide the quality services that our community needs

- Ensure that people needing care, have access to care
- Work with community and state partners to support people at risk of suicide
- Seek to advance the understanding of diverse perspectives and deliver inclusive services
- Collaborate with community partners to integrate services in ways that add value and improve outcomes
- Expand treatment options for people with acute mental health and developmental needs
- Expand Substance Abuse treatment
- Expand Elder Care
- Strengthen peer support models
- Expand services that promote prevention and healthy lifestyles
- Partner with corrections to serve forensic population

### Recruit and retain a quality workforce that is engaged in our agency and the well-being of the people we serve

- Promote a culture that encourages professional growth and development
- Promote a culture that honors diversity and equity within our agency and our community
- Promote flexible work locations and work hours that promote work/life balance
- Ensure that all teams have clearly defined roles and expectations
- Ensure that all teams have the resources they need to make informed decisions
- Ensure that all employees have access to advanced training to enhance their skills
- Ensure that employees have a mechanism to articulate concerns/ideas/successes

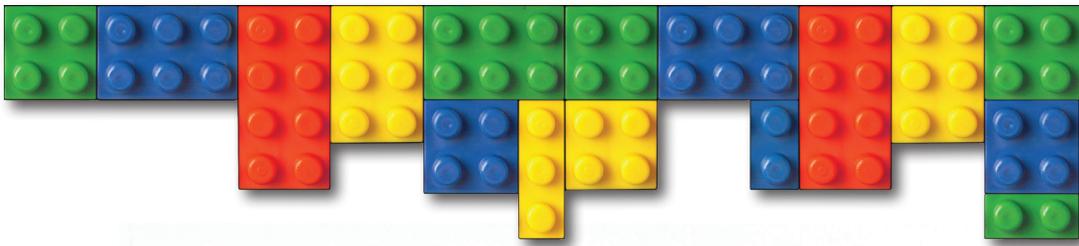
## Ensure that our agency is financially healthy and has the resources to adapt to changing needs

- Promote space efficiencies and leverage remote capabilities
- Maximize efficiencies in the way we deliver care
- Diversify Funding

## Inform the community about the importance of mental health and the value of our services.

- Foster and celebrate continued collaboration with community partners
- Enhance anti-STIGMA campaign
- Promote and engage community partners and community members through trainings to inform and educate the alignment of mental health with physical health
- Organize events, including cause related, to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and engage community in the value that NCSS provides
- Increased use of digital platforms to improve community engagement



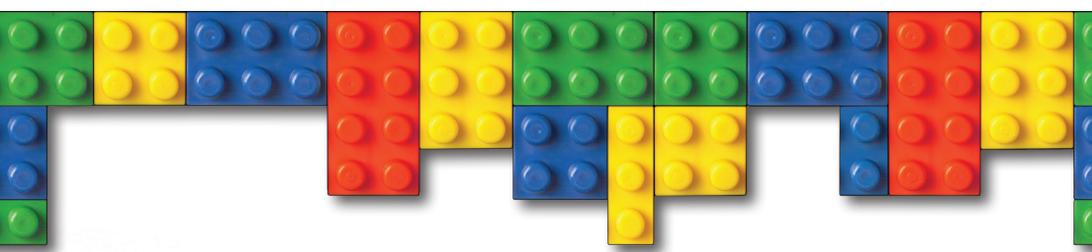


## Acknowledgments

Our current 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan is the culmination of over a year of work. Our dedicated Strategic Planning Committee reviewed thousands of data elements from a diverse cross section of our community. We carefully considered all of this information, and believe that our Strategic Plan builds on existing strengths, addresses areas of weakness, and establishes clear goals that will benefit the people we serve, and make our community stronger. The following includes some of the primary sources of information used to develop our NCSS 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan:

- NMC Community Health Needs Assessment
- 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment for Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties
- Community Partner Survey
- DMH 10 Year Vision
- Interview Your Neighbor Survey
- NCSS Board of Directors and Local Standing Committees Surveys
- NCSS Employee Engagement, Wellness and Diversity Surveys
- NCSS Person Served Survey
- Vermont's Suicide Prevention Coalition Strategies





## Thank You

A special “Thank You” to Community Partners, NCSS Staff, and the people we serve. Your willingness to tell your story and share your experience, has made this process possible.

Community Partners include:

- St. Albans Police Department
- Vermont State Police St. Albans Barracks
- Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH)
- Northwestern Medical Center
- Vermont Department of Health, Franklin County Office
- Franklin County Home Health Agency
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Aging and Independent Living
- Department for Children and Families
- Grand Isle Supervisory Union
- Maple Run Unified School District
  - Missisquoi Valley School District
  - Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union
  - Franklin West Supervisory Union



# NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING

& SUPPORT SERVICES



NCSS is a member of the Vermont Care Partners statewide network of sixteen non-profit, community-based agencies providing mental health, substance use and intellectual and developmental disability support.



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