

Vermont Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services
February 18, 2015

1. The Designated and Specialized Service Agencies are actively working to adopt the principles of “Centers of Excellence” which is a growing national movement. Those principles include offering immediate access to treatment, demonstrating good clinical outcomes, and providing excellent customer service. This builds on our implementation of Results Based Accountability initiative in which we are developing outcome measures for use across our entire system of care. We would be happy to share our progress on this with you.
2. We appreciate the DS caseload request in the FY15 budget and believe it will be adequate to meet the needs of the population.
3. We appreciate the Medicaid Rate increase for FY14 and proposed for FY15. Thank you. We are continuing to have significant work force challenges and therefore need flexibility in the distribution of these funds. We also need resources for infrastructure like electronic health records, heat, gas mileage, etc. Given your role in the State budget, please note that hospitals continue to receive higher rate increases and state employees will be receiving 2.5% for each of the next 2 years. So our progress on the cost shift, inflation and competing in the workforce market is minimal, in fact, it’s getting worse.
4. Investments made with the ACT 79 mental health funds have been tremendous. We are particularly benefiting from the increased availability of case management, crisis outreach, intensive residential and the crisis facilities. The results so far show decreases in psychiatric inpatient use by both the CRT and Adult Outpatient populations. Our partnerships with law enforcement are growing stronger and more training is planned to make further progress. Initial data shows decreases in incarceration rates for persons with mental health conditions.
5. Designated Agencies should have adequate capacity funding to do assessment and treatment of individuals who will be screened pre-trial as part of the Governor's proposal to reduce incarceration (S.295). After arrest individuals will be screened pre-trial and those who screen positive for substance abuse and/or mental health conditions and low for criminogenic risk will be referred for further assessment and treatment. We support this initiative, but need resources that will give us the capacity to do assessments and treatment, as needed. We ask for value-based capacity funding rather than Fee-for-Service billing. The Governor’s budget request includes \$8 million for the Hubs to address the pent up demand for medication assisted treatment, but there are no new funds for Designated Agencies where many of these referrals for assessments will be made. The Senate Judiciary Committee has identified this need. We will be meeting with the Department of Vermont Health Access to discuss expectations and options.

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Executive Director