



ADVOCACY DAY - VERMONT STATE HOUSE  
SENATE HEALTH AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

Good morning. Thank you for your time this morning for advocates who work with survivors of domestic and sexual violence to share our insights with you. My name is Karen Lipinczyk, and I am the Shelter Manager at WISE of the Upper Valley. WISE leads the Upper Valley to end gender-based violence through survivor-centered advocacy, prevention, education and mobilization for social change. Today I want to share with you some stories about what is working for survivors of violence in our community and how we can all help support these efforts.

Survivors access multiple systems of support and services in order to heal and live lives free from violence. These systems include:

- Housing
  - In my work as Shelter Manager, I work with people seeking stable permanent housing on a daily basis. In our region, there is a lack of affordable housing options – especially one-bedroom apartments. This creates a back-log in our shelter, which ends up functioning as transitional rather than emergency housing for many of the people that we serve. As a result, many survivors rely on General Assistance to meet emergency housing needs.
  - We have multiple partnerships with other service providers in order to meet survivors' housing needs – including the Haven.
  - We are very hopeful that the State's efforts to move to a coordinated or single point of entry for housing will help survivors of domestic and sexual violence find permanent stable housing more quickly.
  
- Mental Health
  - Survivors of domestic and sexual violence experience complex trauma which impact their overall health and wellbeing and can pose significant barriers.
  - We rely on our strong partnership with our Designated Agency – HCRS. HCRS has been a terrific collaborating partner providing immediate access and case management for individuals who need their services. HCRS can also connect survivors with expertise and resources that we can't.
  
- Health Care



- The survivors we work with access general health care on both an emergency and ongoing basis. The expansion of Medicaid programs has literally been lifesaving for many survivors.
- We have had a great working relationship with the Good Neighbors Clinic the Ray Logan dental clinic, which provide medical homes to survivors who are in transition and have many different complex medical needs.

Survivors rely on each and every one of these systems – and more. The ability of these systems to work together can be literally lifesaving for survivors. Thank you for your ongoing work to ensure that Vermont’s health, mental health and social services system provide a coordinated approach.