

For Immediate Release
March 26, 2020

Contact: Mike Rama
(607) 287-9236

Regional Response Command Center Established and Underway for Washington and Northern Orange Counties.

**Established to save lives by reducing hospital surge and ensure the safety of
Central Vermont's vulnerable populations and communities.**

Washington and Northern Orange Counties – On Monday, March 23, the Washington and Northern Orange Counties Regional Response Command Center (WNOC-RRCC) officially became operational.

WNOC-RRCC is a unique, unified regional collaboration of local community wellness and support services formed to act as the county-level response center to assist in the coordination and action of local efforts to support vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

WNOC-RRCC is a modular consortium of staff and volunteers from Capstone Community Action, Downstreet Housing & Community Development, The Vermont Department of Health, and involvement from members of THRIVE, the region's accountable community for health group.

"The novel complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its swiftly moving and far-reaching effects on our people, have left our state systems for vulnerable Vermonters overwhelmed. It is our goal to fill in the gaps. WNOC-RRCC will work to support and enhance the activities and volunteerism that is happening on the local level, guided by the state-level response. We want to facilitate the swift actions that need to happen across the region to support and ensure the safety of those most at risk and impacted during this national emergency," commented Sue Minter, Executive Director of Capstone Community Action. "When the state reached out to us requesting our assistance with the statewide Homeless Response, we realized the need to act in a new way. That is why we are utilizing the Incident Command Model to ensure our actions are coordinated, efficient, and impactful," she explained. Minter, along with Eileen Peltier, Executive Director of Downstreet Housing & Community Development, and Joan Marie Misek, District Director of The Vermont Department of Health are the three Unified Commanders of WNOC-RRCC.

The following are highlights of what WNOC-RRCC has been able to achieve thus far:

- Assisted the Good Samaritan Haven, Central Vermont's only shelter for homeless persons, in successfully implementing COVID-19 health procedures, procure new emergency sites, and transition all services to new locations to support the 150 homeless persons currently receiving support in the region

- Actively supporting and securing necessary resources including PPE, staff, and volunteers to transition units of Goddard College to serve individuals in recovery from COVID-19.
- Utilizing Capstone’s Community Kitchen Academy and in collaboration with the Salvation Army and Enough Ministries of Barre, WNOCC-RRCC is now providing 435 meals per day (145 breakfasts, lunches, dinners) to the homeless populations in the four emergency housing sites. This officially began Tuesday of this week.

“Having only officially been operational since Monday, we have accomplished a great deal, and our goal is to become able to take on more in the coming days and weeks” said Eileen Peltier, Executive Director of Downstreet Housing & Community Development, and Unified Commander of WNOCC-RRCC. “Working in partnership as low-income housing, anti-poverty, and public health providers, we can support our hospital by providing County-level support for critical areas of need for our community," she explained.

WNOCC-RRCC is focused on providing non-medical, but essential social services to municipalities, organizations, and individuals in need, including but not limited to providing or securing food, shelter, information, medical supplies, transportation, volunteers, etc. “This collaboration has evolved out of the THRIVE network, an accountable community for health, which recognizes the social determinants of health in our society as critical to community wellness. We are supporting our Central Vermont Medical Center in every way we can,” explained Jean Marie Misek, the Vermont Department of Health’s District Director for Washington County and Unified Commander of the WNOCC-RRCC.

WNOCC-RRCC is currently requesting volunteers and will be managing an active volunteer list to deploy as community needs arise. WNOCC-RRCC is also accepting requests for support; however, please note that due to volume, we may not be able to accommodate all requests at this time. Please direct your inquiries to the appropriate WNOCC-RRCC member or resource listed below:

Volunteer related inquiries:

Allison Levin, Volunteer Coordinator, communityharvestvt@gmail.com

Personal or organizational assistance inquiries:

A WNOCC-RRCC call center is currently being developed and is expected to be announced publicly later this the week.

Partnership inquiries (organizations, municipalities, and planning entities only):

Jaclyn Holden, Deputy Liaison Officer, jhphconsulting@gmail.com

Media and communication inquiries:

Mike Rama, Public Information and Liaison Officer, mrma@downstreet.org

###

About Washington & Northern Orange Counties Regional Response Command Center

WNOC-RRCC is a unified regional response of local community wellness and support services formed to provide emergency protective measures during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal is to save lives by reducing hospital surge and ensure the safety of Central Vermont's vulnerable populations and communities. We will achieve these objectives by providing non-critical, but essential social services to municipalities, organizations, and individuals in need, including but not limited to providing or securing food, shelter, information, medical supplies, transportation, volunteers, etc.

Currently, involved parties include staff and volunteers from Capstone Community Action, Downstreet Housing & Community Development, The Vermont Department of Health, THRIVE, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, Central Vermont Medical Center.

Why WNOC-RRCC Exists

The breadth and complexity of COVID-19 have created an overwhelming demand for our state support systems. WNOC-RRCC has been formed to act as the county-level response center to assist in the coordination and action of local efforts to support vulnerable populations during this viral pandemic.

Vulnerable populations are defined as:

- Homeless
- Seniors
- Foster children and families
- People with disabilities
- Community members with mental health challenges
- Families with essential workers with childcare needs
- Families and individuals who are experiencing financial distress
- Mental health at risk
- Geographical sites: Congregate settings (group homes), Individual homes, Apartment complexes, private or nonprofit managed, Foster homes, Recovery sites, Shelters, I/Q sites, Medical surge sites

Service Area

Central Vermont Medical Center's service area including Washington County & the Northeast region of Orange County, including the communities of Brookfield, Orange, Washington, and Williamstown.

Contact Information

If you would like more information about WNOG-RRCC, please contact:

Mike Rama
Public Information and Liaison Officer
mrama@downstreet.org