PROPOSAL: Expanding the Number of Psychiatric/Mental Health Providers/Prescribers in Vermont

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

This purpose of this application is to increase the number of mental health, substance abuse providers in the state. The project seeks funds for preparation of 16 Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (PMHNPs) to help address the mental health and opioid crisis in Vermont over a two- to three-year period.

Nurse Practitioners, currently working in Primary Care practices in rural and underserved areas of Vermont and with a desire to remain in those practices will be the primary target for enrollment. According to the CDC, 31% of Primary Care visits are attributable to mental health related issues. The proposed program would be offered part time in a distance available/hybrid format to make it accessible to currently employed nurse practitioners in rural areas and in the VA system. Upon completion, the PMHNP will receive the degree of Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), be prepared to sit for the certification examination for a PMHNP and obtain licensure. All graduates will have preparation to seek the waiver to participate in Medication Assisted Treatment, or Buprenorphine Prescription.

Currently there are 57 recognized PMHNPs in Vermont. The Vermont Nurse Practitioner Interest Group estimates that 70% are over 50 years of age. The data from the Department of Health 2016 survey indicates there were 189 psychiatrists (or 121 FTEs) in Vermont with 40% or 88 individuals over the age of 60. Licensing data from 2017 indicates that 498 nurse practitioners work in the state of Vermont who primarily work in family, adult, and women's health and pediatrics with 70% working outside of Chittenden County.

Funding for this project will expand the PMHNP numbers, in Vermont, by 20. By recruiting Nurse Practitioners currently working in Primary Care, who have an interest in a PMHNP role, it is anticipated that these individuals will return to the primary care setting with their current Primary Care credential and added PMHNP credential, allowing them the expertise and certification to serve the psychiatric mental health/substance abuse needs of their primary care population. The program will have a strong focus on interprofessional practice. Nurse Practitioners, currently functioning as educators in the Department of Nursing will be included in each cohort to ensure we have faculty for continuation of the program following outside funding to sustain the program.

The program can be completed on line and with the use of adobe connect, allowing students to remain in their own community with several planned trips to the UVM campus during the program. Multiple agencies have agreed to work on this project by supplying clinical sites and identifying nurse practitioners in their site who could be educated to meet the psychiatric mental health needs in their area. We will conduct ongoing evaluation of the project and progression to the defined outcomes. The program would be replicable in other sites and will be sustainable after the grant.

Prepare 20 Nurse Practitioners as Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners

Tuition Scholarships. Funding is being requested to support 32 credit hours at $646 per credit for **sixteen** Vermont Nurse Practitioners to become educated and certified as Psychiatric Mental Health (PMHNP). Tuition request: (32 x 646 x 20) =$413,440

Student Stipends. Books, subscriptions, travel to clinical sites will be partially subsidized at the rate of $6,000 per student: Stipend request: (6,000 x 20) =$120,000

Staffing needs. Faculty and consultants with PMH and addiction expertise will develop curriculum and field placements, ensure the program meets licensure requirements & collect data to measure outcomes and ensure quality programming. Staffing request: $80,000

Faculty oversight and advising. Recruitment and retention of students, clinical placements, liaison with agencies, and student support will be provided by a UVM faculty member. Faculty request: 1.0 FTE plus UVM benefits. $122,528

Time Frame. Within 36 months of notification of grant funding 16 nurse practitioners will be prepared to work in their rural/high need Vermont practices with the license and credentials to treat individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues.
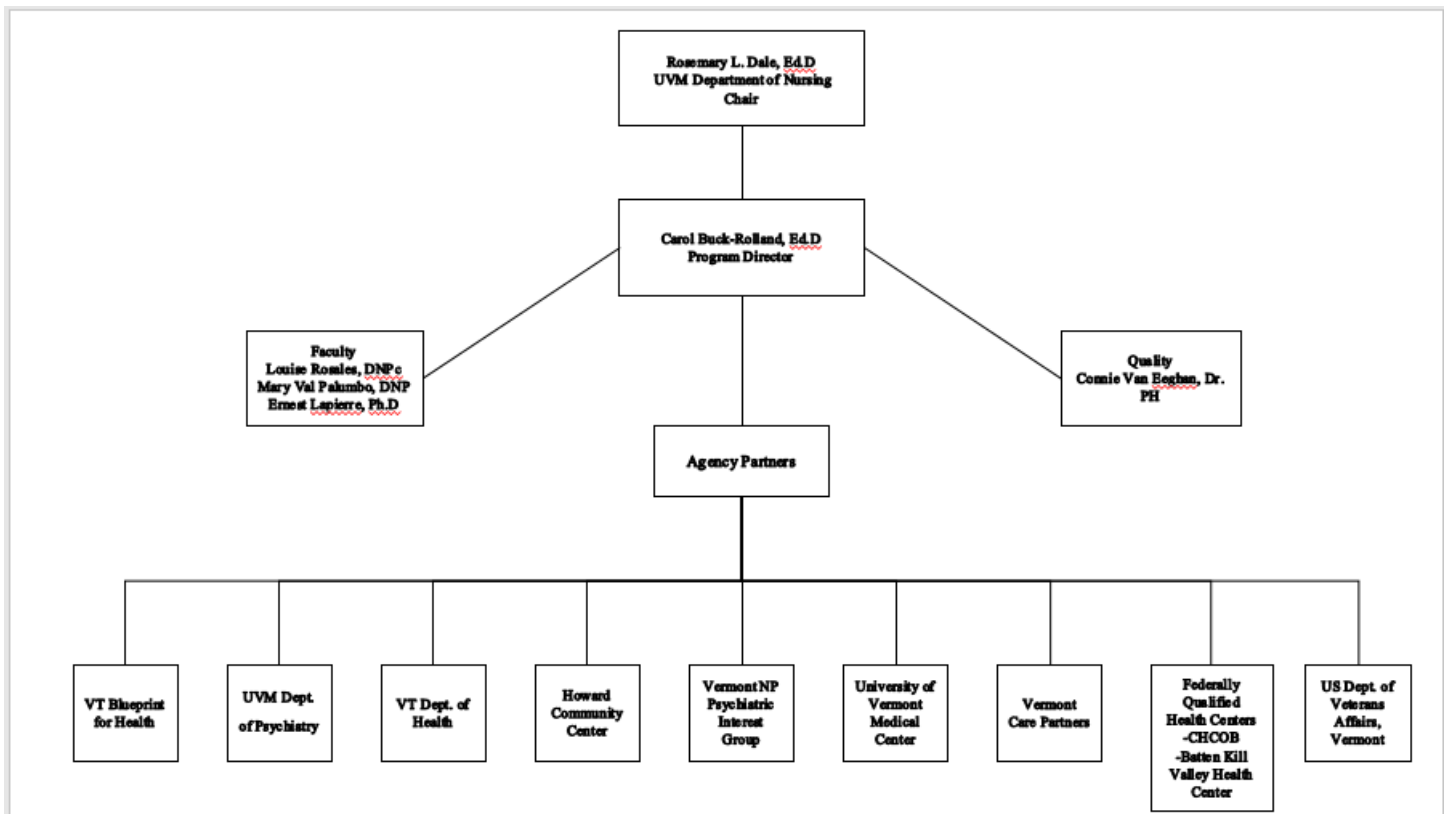
Total request: $735,968

SERVICE COMMITMENT: Students educated in the *Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner graduate program* will be required to provide at least 3 years of service to Vermont.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES/RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

1. Increased number of X waivered providers, thereby reducing the wait time on access to MAT in the state.
2. Increased access to Psychiatric Mental Health in primary care practices.
   - Physically more accessible by placing them in the primary care setting
   - Financially more accessible as they will be a primary care service as opposed to a specialty referral
   - Acceptability of service will increase as PMH is seen as a routine component of care
   - Recruiting priority will be focused on underserved areas as per the VDH data 2016 so that there will be an increased number of PMHNPs in the most underserved areas of Newport, Addison, and Essex
3. Increased workforce of prescribers to allow PMH innovation in the community related to de-hospitalization efforts
   - Decreased wait times for access to PMH care with the addition of 20 PMHNPs in primary care settings
   - Decreased visits to the ED
4. Averting a major PMH crisis with the aging workforce by educating 20 new PMHNPs who will return to their communities. PMHNPs are prescribing practitioners who can supplement the forecasted crisis in available psychiatrist providers in Vermont as the workforce ages.
   - Program completion rates will be no more than 24 months with 20 PMHNPs entering the workforce prepared to care for PMH/ Behavioral Health patients
   - Documentation of percent of work/ practice hours delivering care for the intended population to include MAT)
   - Documentation of continued employment in settings/regions with highest need (vulnerable/ underserved)

There is commitment from statewide partners to this project. The Table of Organization below illustrates the structure to carry out the project and the partners, all of whom have committed in writing to being active participants in the project.

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Agency Partners

VT Blueprint for Health | UVM Dept. of Psychiatry | VT Dept. of Health | Howard Community Center | Vermont NP Psychiatric Interest Group | University of Vermont Medical Center | Vermont Care Partners | Federally Qualified Health Centers -CHCOB -Batten Kill Valley Health Center | US Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Vermont

Current funding sources: None.   **Relevant federal account program**: HRSA, NIMH, NINR

Submitted by:

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