

Bill Kelly - 2108 County Rd Montpelier, VT 05602
(802) 223-0924 calakel@comcast.net

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Legislators,

Tonight I attended the community based public hearing in Barre VT on the Governor's budget. I expected to speak off-the-cuff in support of the Copeland Center grant of \$60,000 which I understand would be cut. Having seen the presenters tonight I felt I had a better chance of expressing myself by putting this request in writing.

Mary Ellen Copeland pioneered a Recovery Movement for people with mental health issues here in VT in the late 90's. It sprung from her own experience with her struggles with depression and treatment, the dire prognoses and predictions she received from mental health professionals in the late 80's, as well as from witnessing as a young girl, her mother's experience of spending years in a mental hospital before returning to the community to have an rich and meaningful life. Mary Ellen did a survey of people who had depression, asking what worked, what didn't work? This became her first book, *The Depression Workbook*. She then began teaching self-help workshops for people living with mental health challenges. In one such series, responding to a complaint about the complexity of organizing wellness activities and responsibilities, with the help of that day's attendees the WRAP plan was born.

Simply put, the Wellness Recovery Action Plan, or WRAP for short, is a living document made by an individual which guides one through periods of wellness, identifies when things are not going well, specifies just what to do to avoid a crisis, and what to do to when in crisis, even how to emerge healthy once the crisis is over. The workshops are taught by trained facilitators, one of which has had mental health experience. Every WRAP plan is unique to the author and everything in it is pertinent to the individual's situation. It's a living document because as time goes on and people work the Actions they came up with for the various stages of wellness, they make changes, additions, and deletions to keep it up to date. It's a tool that can be used alone, in conjunction with family, supporters, or professionals, to keep it real and effective. The WRAP program, started here in VT has been taught and spread not only nation-wide, but world-wide.

Personally, I became involved with the VT mental health system in the mid 80's; my youngest brother had a bipolar break here and struggled with recovery until his death in 1990. I wish that he had access to such a plan and the Hope that it now gives to so many, who otherwise might feel hopeless and uneasy with the stigma of conventional mental health options. I think he might have been able to see the merits of a structured self-help plan with indicators and resources that he could track.

Professionally, I worked at Washington County Mental Health for 24 years, and retired from their emergency mobil-screening-team three years ago. I was lucky to get in on the WRAP plan workshops from the beginning, and became a WRAP facilitator in the late 90's. I was able to co-

facilitate workshops for a number of other mental health agencies around the state, training clients, professionals, and supporters in the principals and merits of WRAP. These included some work with Veterans at the VA, and a series of WRAP related wellness classes at the VT State Hospital in Waterbury. As a crisis worker I have seen an increase in crisis patients filling up the behavioral health beds and overflowing halls of emergency rooms. I was able also to use my WRAP knowledge with clients on the crisis phone, in emergency rooms, and at their home when necessary to redirect and remind them of their plan to avoid crisis. It's fair to say that hospital visits and higher-end-treatment-options have been reduced because of the self-directed and supported plans now available to a community of people believing in Hope, Self-Responsibility, Education, Advocacy, and Support, the 5 essential tenets of Recovery.

Please keep the \$60,000 allocations for the Copeland grant alive. WRAP started in VT and is needed in VT. We must be assured that the program stays alive, that new people get trained, and we reduce the dependence on high-end hospitalizations that should and can be avoided. You can google WRAP, or go to mentalhealthrecovery.com.

Thank you
Bill Kelly