

## Memorandum

**To:** DCF Stakeholders  
**From:** Ken Schatz, DCF Commissioner  
Christine Johnson, Family Services Deputy Commissioner  
**Re:** Suite 12 Program Update  
**Date:** April 3, 2020

The Department for Children and Families (DCF) is moving its short-term residential stabilization program currently located at Suite 12 in St. Albans to the Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence location (Middlesex Program). This move is in response to COVID-19 and the need for further facility security measures that were not available at the Suite 12 location. This move will take place on April 6.

On March 24, 2020 DCF opened a new staff-secure residential program for youth in St. Albans called Suite 12. This program was designed for youth in DCF custody, regardless of court status, who are experiencing behavioral and/or mental health concerns requiring short-term residential stabilization. This program was created in response to COVID-19 and the need for the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Facility to be used for adult psychiatric patients who are COVID-19 positive.

Suite 12 in St. Albans was not able to be fitted with the security measures needed for this level of programming. As a result, DCF has been looking for a new facility to house this program. The Middlesex Program is hardware secure with locked doors and perimeter fencing. The Middlesex Program, which was opened in 2013, has been vacant since the Department of Mental Health temporarily moved the Middlesex residents on March 31 to an unoccupied, separate unit within the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital in Berlin in order ease operating challenges and improve safety and care. The Middlesex Program offers outdoor space, a recreational area, and therapeutic interior spaces for activities, creativity, and wellness. The Suite 12 program will be moved to the Middlesex location temporarily during this COVID-19 crisis.

Brenda Dawson (MSW) will continue to serve as the Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Middlesex Program and the program will continue to be staffed by DCF employees. The Middlesex Program is a five-bed program that serves males ages 13 through 18. Like Suite 12, the Middlesex Program is characterized as a short-term stabilization program. The program and services in Middlesex include positive behavior modification programming called Trauma Informed Effective Reinforcement (TIER), Safe Crisis Management, educational programming, psychiatry services provided by the University of Vermont, Alpine Telehealth services, mental health and crisis screenings provided by Howard Center's First Call. The Intake and Screening, Clinical Crisis and Acute Psychiatric Response and Emergency Safety Interventions policies developed for Woodside will apply at the Middlesex program.

The Middlesex Program is a secure program for youth in DCF custody in the delinquency system as well as youth in the custody of the Department of Corrections. For youth in DCF custody and with a pending or adjudicated delinquency, admissions to the program will follow 33 V.S.A. §5291 and Family Services Division Policy 171. Other youth in the custody of DCF will not be served at the Middlesex Program.

If you have any questions about the Middlesex Program, please contact Christine Johnson, Deputy Commissioner, Family Services Division.

