

## Memorandum

**To:** DCF Stakeholders  
**From:** Ken Schatz, DCF Commissioner  
Christine Johnson, Family Services Deputy Commissioner  
**Re:** Woodside Update  
**Date:** March 27, 2020

The Vermont Agency of Human Services is working to ensure that vulnerable Vermonters are cared for during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) have identified the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center (Woodside) as an underutilized facility that could be repurposed for other uses. Woodside has served less than five youth at any given time for over six months. As a temporary measure in response to COVID-19, effective March 25, 2020, the Woodside location is no longer serving youth. Instead, Woodside will be utilized by DMH to care for adult psychiatric patients with significant psychiatric needs who are COVID-19 positive.

DCF has opened an interim staff-secure program in St. Albans, called Suite 12, in space across the street from Northwestern Counseling and Support Services. This new program is open to all youth in DCF custody as well as youth in the custody of the Department of Corrections. The staff at Suite 12 are DCF employees, including employees who formerly worked at Woodside. Brenda Dawson (MSW) is serving as the Interim Chief Executive Officer of this new program. Suite 12 is a five-bed program that serves males ages 13 through 18. Suite 12 is characterized as a short-term stabilization program. The program and services present at Suite 12 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 Suite 12 program.

Suite 12 is a staff-secure program. Admissions to the program will follow the normal processes that are used in similar programs with coordination between district Family Services Workers and DCF's Specialized Services Unit. Suite 12 is not a locked program so the admissions processes set forth in 33 V.S.A. §5291 and Family Services Division Policy 171 do not apply.

If you have any questions about the new Suite 12 program in St. Albans, please contact Christine Johnson, Deputy Commissioner, Family Services Division.

