

H.315

An act relating to COVID-19 relief (showing health care-related changes from House-passed version)

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Sec. 6. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; EMERGENCY  
OUTREACH SERVICES GRANTS

The sum of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from the **General Fund American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund** to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 for grants to peer-led and impacted member-led organizations for emergency outreach services to address COVID-19-related needs. Of these funds, the Department shall allocate \$150,000.00 to a mental health peer-support organization and \$150,000.00 to an organization supporting the needs of LGBTQ youths.

Sec. 7. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; HOUSING **SUPPORTS**

The sum of \$4,000,000.00 is appropriated from the **General Fund American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund** to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 **for grants to Vermont Care Partners and other stakeholder organizations to provide housing supports to make existing housing and community-based service facilities providing mental health services more accessible, safe, and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act or to expand capacity** in community settings. The Department shall select the projects in

consultation with **the Agency of Human Services Secretary's Office, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, and** representatives of the designated agencies, specialized service agencies, and peer organizations. The grants shall be awarded to organizations that demonstrate the greatest ability to respond immediately to the need for housing **supports** and shall be for projects that will not require additional State funds for operating costs in future years **or that can redirect current expenditures, or both.** **To the greatest extent possible, grants shall be awarded for projects in underserved areas of the State.** At least one grant shall be awarded to a peer-run or peer-directed housing organization. **The Department of Mental Health shall partner with the Agency of Human Services Secretary's Office and the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living to include as potential grant candidates all designated and specialized service agencies that provide developmental and mental health services.** **In addition, the Department, in consultation with the designated agencies, specialized service agencies, and peer organizations, shall give priority to proposed projects that meet one or more of the following criteria:**

- (1) create movement within the current system of care, such as those that would move individuals out of hospitals and other restrictive settings and back into a community setting;**

~~(2) focus on equity and on providing patient-centered care; and~~

~~(3) employ or build on successful, evidence-based models of supportive housing;~~

Sec. 8. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; **DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES;** CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

The sum of \$850,000.00 is appropriated from the **General Fund American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund** to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 to provide funds to the **mental health** ~~and specialized service~~ agencies to enable them each to hire an additional case manager to provide case management services to Vermont residents who may not previously have been part of an agency's caseload but whose lives have been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and who are now urgently in need of these agencies' supports.

**Agencies have the flexibility to identify where the targeted need exists within their agency, across all programs. The purpose funded in this section is limited to addressing the impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic and not intended to create an ongoing funding commitment.**

Sec. 9. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; WORKFORCE TRAINING AND WELLNESS SUPPORTS

The sum of \$150,000.00 is appropriated from the **General Fund American**

**Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund** to the Department of Mental Health in fiscal year 2021 for training and wellness supports for frontline health care workers to help them meet Vermont residents' current mental health needs, such as training for emergency department personnel responding to an increased demand for crisis services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and training on trauma-informed and trauma-specific care for mental health professionals responding to the surge in mental health treatment needs. These workers would also benefit from wellness supports as they continue to care for people in crisis while experiencing their own stress, anxiety, and trauma as a result of the pandemic.

**Sec. \_\_. DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; USE OF FUNDS;**

**REPORT**

**On or before January 15, 2022, the Department of Mental Health shall report to the House Committees on Health Care and on Appropriations and the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Appropriations with a summary of the use of the funds appropriated in Secs. 3–6 of this Act, including the amounts distributed or expended under each section, to whom the funds were distributed, and how the funds were used by each recipient or by the Department, as applicable.**

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Sec. 14. GREEN MOUNTAIN CARE BOARD; DEPARTMENT OF

HEALTH; HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES; DATA COLLECTION  
AND ANALYSIS

(a) The sum of \$66,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Green Mountain Care Board in fiscal year 2021 to provide the State share pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 9374(h) for updates to the Vermont Healthcare Claims Uniform Reporting and Evaluation System (VHCURES) to improve data collection related to health equity.

(b) The sum of \$134,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health in fiscal year 2021 for collection and analysis of demographic data, including race and ethnicity data, regarding Vermont residents who experience health disparities.

~~(c) Upon expenditure of the funds, the Green Mountain Care Board shall report to the House and Senate Appropriations Committee on the specific uses of the funds appropriated in subsections (a) and (b) of this section.~~

Sec. 14a. 18 V.S.A. § 1129(d) and (e) are amended to read: **(NEW)**

(d) The Department may provide confidential registry information to health care provider networks serving Vermont patients, to the Vermont Health Information Exchange, and, with the approval of the Commissioner, to

researchers who present evidence of approval from an institutional review board in accordance with 45 C.F.R. § 164.512.

(e) Prior to releasing confidential information pursuant to subsections (c) and (d) of this section, the Commissioner shall obtain from State registries, health care provider networks, the Vermont Health Information Exchange, and researchers a written agreement to keep any identifying information confidential and privileged.

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Sec. 17. PRACTICAL NURSE; WORKFORCE FUNDING **(NEW)**

(a) The sum of \$1,400,000.00 is appropriated from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 - Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Vermont State Colleges to open 40 to 45 seats in the Practical Nurse Program in partnership with skilled nursing facilities across the State to upskill existing staff to achieve certification as a Practical Nurse. These funds may be used as follows:

(1) Up to \$500,000.00 for administrative and start-up costs for Vermont Technical College.

(2) Up to \$260,000.00 in incentive payments in the amount of \$6,000.00 per student to offset lost income during enrollment in the Program.

(3) All remaining funds are allocated for tuition and fees payments for required prerequisite courses at Community College of Vermont and for the

Practical Nurse Program at Vermont Technical College after available federal and State financial aid is applied to ensure no cost to the student.

(b) To be eligible to participate in the program, a skilled nursing facility shall provide an incentive match in the amount of \$4,000.00 per student during enrollment in the Program.

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Sec. 29. HEALTHCARE WAIVERS: LEGISLATIVE CAPACITY (NEW)

The Joint Fiscal Office is authorized to use available legislative appropriations including carryforward funds to engage a consultant to assist the legislative health care and fiscal committees on the policy and fiscal implications and opportunities related to the Global Commitment waiver and All Payer agreement renewals with Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

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