



WCMHS

Washington County Mental Health Services
885 South Barre Road
Barre, VT 05641

Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee

Budget Testimony

February 12, 2026

Re: Eldercare Mental Health Services

Good afternoon. My name is Mark Schmoll. I have worked at Washington County Mental Health Services for 39 years. For most of that time, I have served as Director of Counseling Services, in the division now known as the Intensive Adult Mental Health Program. For the past 25 years, I have also coordinated our Eldercare Program.

I am here today to ask that the \$349,763 proposed for elimination in the FY27 budget be restored. Eldercare is essential mental health care for older Vermonters. The Eldercare Program has long been one of the most effective ways to reach older adults who cannot access traditional office-based care. Many of the people we serve are homebound due to medical conditions, mobility limitations, or cognitive decline. Without Eldercare, they would receive no mental health support at all.

Over the years, funding reductions have steadily weakened the program. At its peak, WCMHS had three Eldercare clinicians providing outreach across multiple counties, serving approximately 130 older Vermonters each year. Today, due to funding reductions, the program has been reduced to a single half-time clinician working 20 hours per week, with the capacity to serve only 20 to 25 people.

At the same time, Vermont's older population is growing. The mental health needs associated with aging, including isolation, depression, grief, and cognitive decline, are increasing. Reducing Eldercare further will leave vulnerable older Vermonters without access to care at a time when they need it most.

Eldercare allows older Vermonters to remain stable, maintain their dignity, and continue living in their communities. Without it, many will struggle alone, and some will require more intensive and costly care. Some will wind up unhoused or at risk of that outcome as the Eldercare Program provides stability to assist in this significant area. I respectfully ask you to restore funding for the Eldercare Program.

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Schmoll, MA, LCMHC

Director-Counseling Services (Intensive Adult Mental Health)

Coordinator-Eldercare Program

Washington County Mental Health Services