



Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care, Inc.

Workplace Violence in Vermont Hospitals: Report Summary
Presentation to the House Health Care Committee
January 2024 Report

March 13, 2025

About VPQHC

VPQHC is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1988 and designated in 1989 by the Vermont Legislature as an independent, non-regulatory, peer review committee.

Vermont's 9416 statute established VPQHC as the statewide quality organization in 1995.

VPQHC is a non-lobbying, neutral, and independent organization dedicated exclusively to advancing healthcare quality in Vermont.

Our **mission** is to reduce harm and save lives by advancing data-driven solutions that improve healthcare quality in Vermont.



VPQHC



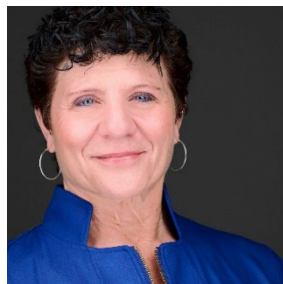
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LSSGBH, CLHP
Quality
Improvement
Specialist



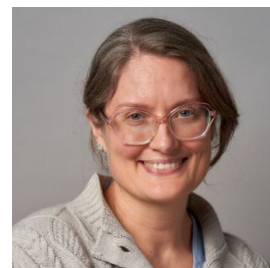
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Strategic Quality
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Bonnie Collins
Program Coordinator
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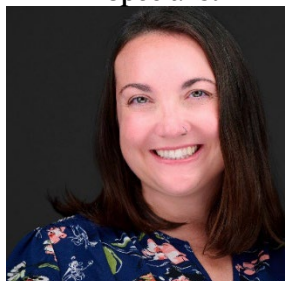
Greta Spottswood,
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Program Director



Ellen Arrowsmith
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Annie Quinn
VTCAP Program
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*Robert
Turanu, MSA
Director of
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(not pictured)*



Randall Messier, MT,
MSA, PCMH CCE
Quality Improvement
Specialist



Bill Marcinkowski
Information Systems
Manager



Angela Morgan, RN,
CPHQ
Program Director:
SANE Initiative

*Hiring :
Training/
Administrative
Coordinator*

VT-CPAP

Our People

~14 FTEs

Decades of experience in healthcare
quality, and direct service experience
across the continuum of care in Vermont



VPQHC Board of Directors

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Emma Harrigan, VP of Policy, Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems

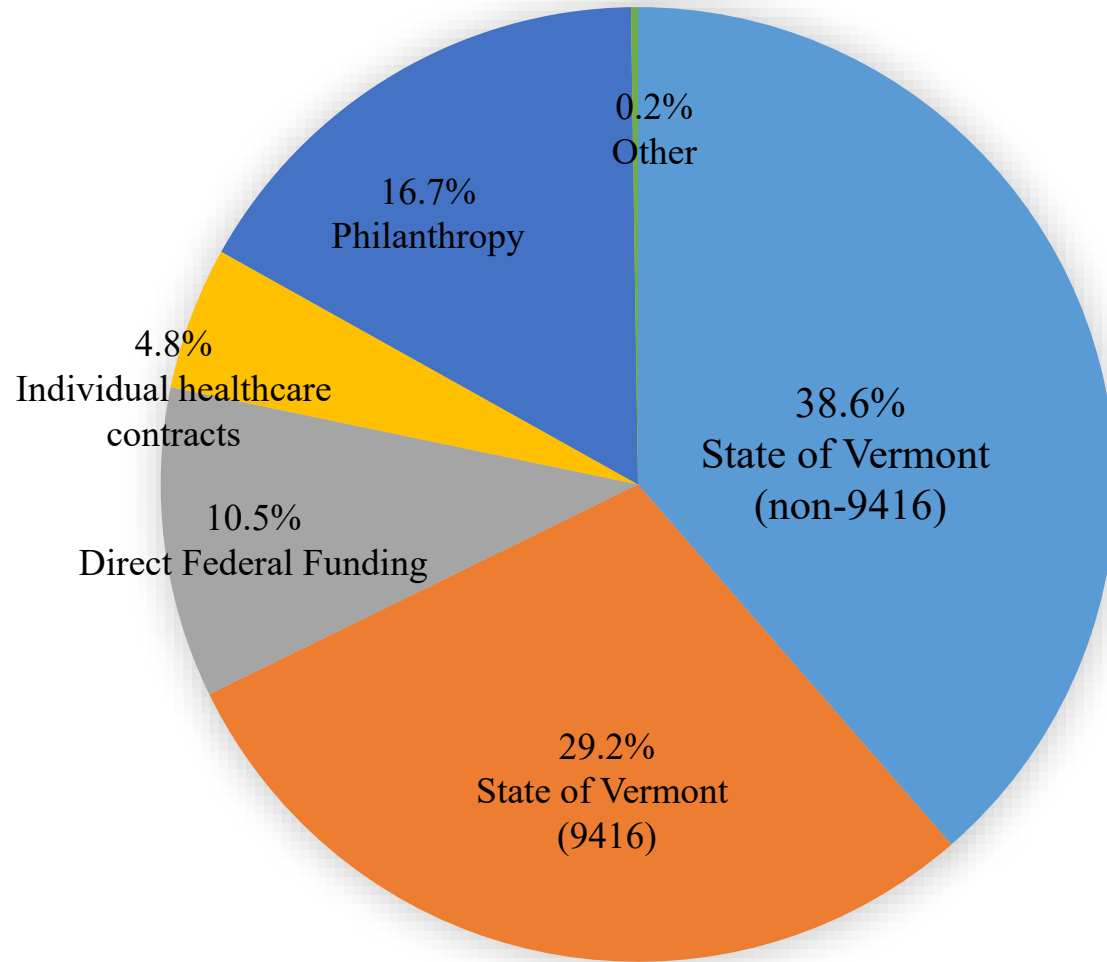
David Healy, Vice President and Senior GIS Applications, Stone Environmental

Kristy Hommel, MS, Mental Health Educator, Advocate & Public Speaker

Pat Jones, MS, BS, Director of Health Care Reform (Interim), Vermont Agency of Human Services

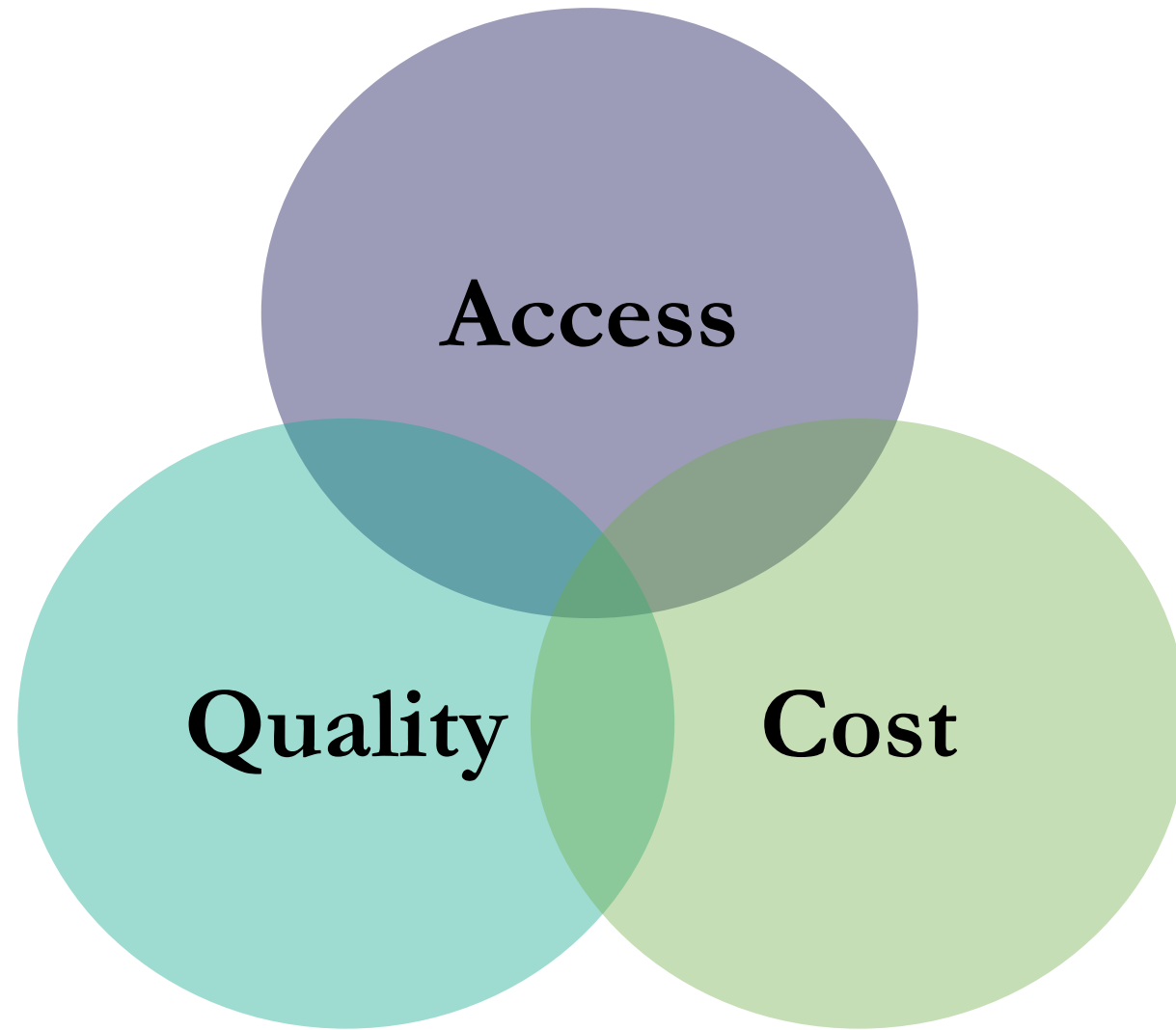
Lila Richardson, Esq., Attorney, Vermont Legal Aid (retired)

VPQHC Funding



VPQHC's 9416 contract provides \$660,000 in annual funding. Per statute, this contract cannot exceed 75% of VPQHC's total operating budget. Currently, it accounts for 29% of the organization's total operating budget.

A well-balanced
healthcare system must
prioritize **quality**
alongside access and
cost.



VPQHC: A Legacy of Advancing Health Care Quality in Vermont

1988
VPQHC is founded an independent nonprofit dedicated to improving the quality and efficiency of Vermont's healthcare system, governed by a coalition of providers, insurers, payers, employers, and consumers.

1990-1991
VPQHC receives a grant to advance continuous quality improvement (CQI) in Vermont hospitals, launching quality improvement projects in obstetrics, cardiology, orthopedics, mental health, AMI, CHF, patient satisfaction, and pneumonia.

1995
Vermont Statute 18 V.S.A. 9416 mandates VPQHC to implement and maintain a state quality assurance system, reinforcing its role in evaluating and improving health care services.

1997-
Focus on pediatric asthma, diabetes, stroke, and heart disease outcomes, launches multiple health initiatives, and develops state guidelines for heart failure.

2003-2004

1989

The Vermont Legislature amends Statute § 1441, granting VPQHC peer review committee status, solidifying its role in health care quality improvement. VPQHC launches statewide quality assurance efforts, implements a health care database, and provides continuous quality improvement (CQI) training.

1992-1994

VPQHC improves Vaginal Birth After Cesarean (VBAC) rates, develops Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and pediatric ear infection guidelines, establishes the first adverse drug event register, and collaborates with the Vermont State Police on patient safety.

VPQHC Select Reports and Resources



#	Initiative	Funder
1	Vermont Department of Corrections - External Quality Review Program	Vermont Department of Corrections
2	Vermont Department of Health - 9416 Contract	Billback funding (contract overseen by the Vermont Department of Health)
3	Patient Safety Surveillance & Improvement System	Vermont Department of Health

Hospital Quality Directors Learning Network facilitation; Care Management Directors Learning Network facilitation; technical support to Infection Preventionists with submission of HAI & SSI data into NHSN; six-part QI 101 training series for all healthcare providers; telchealth utilization analysis using VHCURES; limited time for general QI technical assistance.

Leads the state's efforts in patient safety through a comprehensive surveillance system, including mandatory reporting, site visits, and the development of preventive strategies to reduce serious reportable events.

VPQHC History & Current Initiatives

- Leading QI Initiatives in VT for 37 years
- 17 current initiatives focused on QI in variety of settings: primary care, hospitals, DAs, independent providers

ACT 24: An act related to crimes against health care workers at hospitals and against emergency medical treatment providers

- S.36 (Act 24) of 2023 tasked VPQHC with assessing workplace violence prevention in Vermont hospitals
- Focus areas:
 - Training & de-escalation
 - Staffing levels
 - Patient assessments
 - Reporting systems
 - Physical environment improvements
 - Emphasis on health equity, best practices, and policy recommendations

Report Process

- Literature review on evidence base & best practices
- Statewide hospital assessment survey (7 hospitals participated; small & large)
- Focus groups (5 sessions) to validate findings (Quality Directors, Chief Nursing Officers, Emergency Department Directors, Emergency Department Nurse Managers, and other hospital staff)
- Data analysis to identify common themes
- Recommendations for strengths, opportunities for improvement & policy considerations

Key Findings

Strengths

- ✓ Commitment to safety
- ✓ Willingness to adopt best practices
- ✓ Post-incident support for staff

Challenges

- ✗ Inconsistent de-escalation training
- ✗ Gaps in standardized reporting & data collection
- ✗ Variation in environmental safety standards

Quotes from Focus Groups

- 🔊 “We all, at the same level of care, deserve and have a right to standardized resources for safety.”
- 🔊 “It would be helpful if there was a statewide de-escalation program funded by the state.”
- 🔊 “Hospitals are forced to choose between training and other priorities due to limited resources.”

Recommendations for Policy & Improvement:

- **Implement Standardized De-escalation Training:** Establish a comprehensive, high-quality training program across Vermont hospitals, with trauma-responsive care as a core component among others recommended by The Joint Commission.
- **Enhance Workplace Violence Incident Reporting:** Provide training and resources to improve reporting accuracy, consistency, and usability.
- **Invest in Infrastructure for Staff Safety:** Allocate funding to support facility upgrades that enhance workplace safety and security.
- **Support Ongoing Quality Improvement & Technical Assistance:** Ensure continuous support for hospitals through training, data analysis, and evidence-based strategies.
- **Consider Establishing Minimum Set of Safety Standards:** Define a baseline set of workplace violence prevention measures for hospitals.
- **Support Development of a Learning Network:** Facilitate data sharing, collaboration, and problem-solving among hospitals to address workplace violence challenges collectively.

Disclaimer

- Research for this report was conducted in 2023. While many themes may remain the same, findings may not fully reflect the current state.
- Consider reassessing to capture updated insights and implementing an annual assessment to track trends and measure progress over time.

Key Takeaways

- **Workplace violence is a serious problem in healthcare**, in Vermont and nationally, impacting staff safety and patient care.
- **Best practices exist** for implementing comprehensive workplace violence prevention programs, including training, reporting, security, and de-escalation strategies.
- There is **variation among Vermont hospitals in their current workplace violence prevention initiatives**, with gaps in training, data collection, and physical site measures.
- **Policy, resources, and continuous quality improvement (QI) efforts** can help standardize and strengthen workplace violence prevention across all hospitals, ensuring safer environments for healthcare workers and patients.

Thank you

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