



Vermont's Free & Referral Clinics

Connecting You With Health Care

Strengthening Vermont's Healthcare Safety Net:

FY27 Budget Request of \$925,000

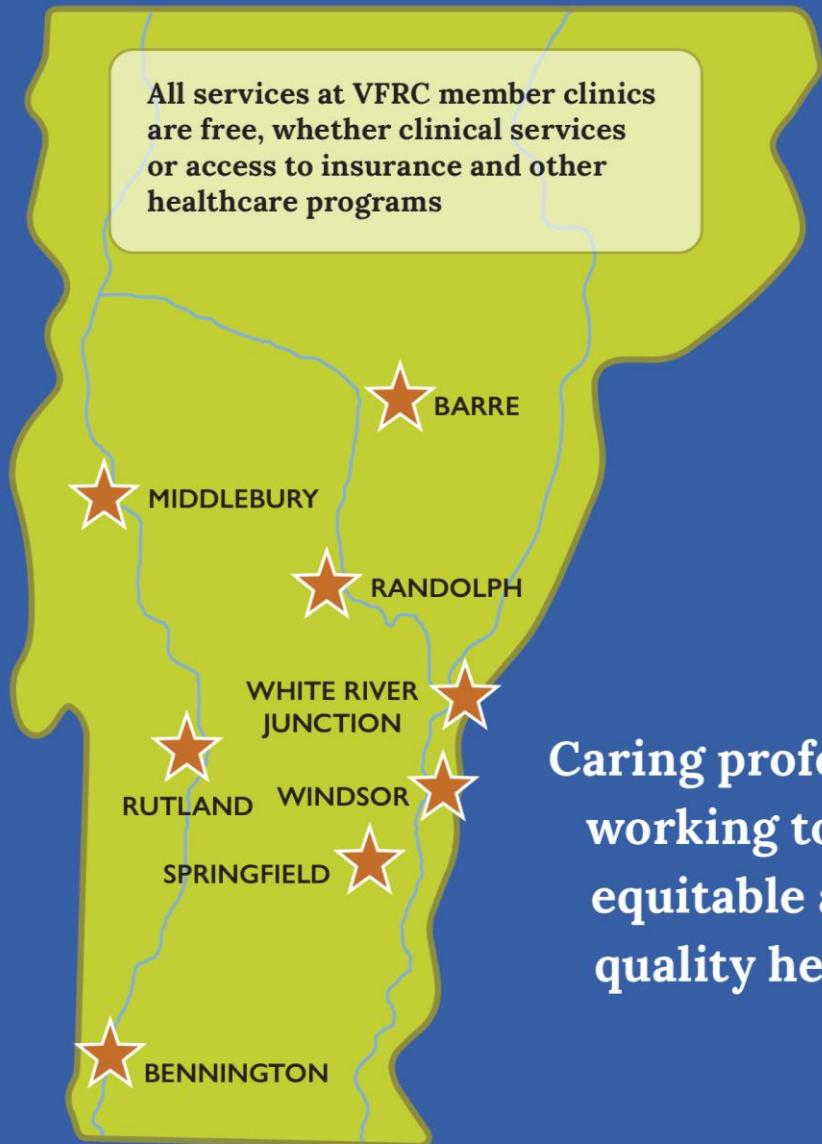
Dan Barlow – Executive Director, People's Health & Wellness Clinic and VFRC Board Chair

Heidi Sulis, MPH – Executive Director, Open Door Clinic and VFRC Board Vice-Chair

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Testimony to the House Health Care Committee on February 10, 2026

EIGHT CLINICS STATEWIDE



Caring professionals
working to provide
equitable access to
quality healthcare.

Our Mission:
VFRC advocates for
a more inclusive,
equitable, and
accessible
healthcare system.



Free = no insurance billed, no payment plans, no sliding fee scales





People's Health & Wellness Clinic Barre, VT

Central Vermont safety-net provider

Small staff supporting 40 volunteer providers

Services: medical care, dental, mental health

Focus on food insecurity, housing, transportation, insurance and other social service program navigation

In FY25:

- 668 unique patients
- 740 medical visits and 457 dental visits
- 46% of patients are uninsured



PEOPLE'S HEALTH
& WELLNESS CLINIC



Open Door Clinic, Middlebury, VT

Last year we served:

- 1,305 unique patients
- 395 new patients
- 572 migrant workers
- 92 H2A workers (agriculture)
- 28 H2B workers (hospitality)
- 13 asylum-seekers
- 333 patients seeking help w/ health insurance



Addressing health disparities: an innovative model

ODC's exam van brings healthcare to workers in the field, expanding capacity and tackling barriers to care:

- Meets workers where they are, reducing how much time they must take off from work
- Removes transportation barrier
- Provides a comfortable and confidential space to be seen by our health care provider
- Addresses language access
- Supports local employers by providing care at their worksites



Rapidly changing healthcare landscape requires more support for free clinics

As we confront widening gaps, more chronic care and complex patient needs, additional funding would allow us to:

- Hire full-time bilingual CHW
- Add part-time medical assistant
- Add dental staffing to support expanded dental program/hours through collaboration with UVM dental resident
- Bring ED to full time to support fundraising demands and increased workload

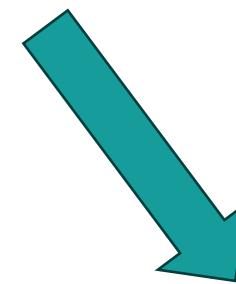
ODC's legislative appropriation covers only 29% of our budget leaving a \$600,000 gap that must be filled through fundraising

FY27 Request: Please raise our grant by

\$925,000



**\$462,500 from
CMS**



**\$462,500 from
Vermont's
General Fund**



**Cost if increase is
granted:**

**\$272.74 per patient
per year***

System Savings:

**\$1.50 invested = \$5
savings in avoided ER
costs**

*Using FY25 patient numbers



Why Now?

HR.1 (ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL)

- Additional Medicaid redeterminations = more churn and procedural issues
- Changes to immigrant eligibility
- Destabilizing effects on broader healthcare system

LOSS OF ENHANCED SUBSIDIES

- More Vermonters disenrolling = more uninsured in need of care
- More Vermonters moving to 'less rich' Bronze plans = more underinsured seeking affordable alternatives

The breadth and depth of need is increasing – patients are coming through our doors with more complex and more severe clinical and SDOH-related needs.

**Vermont's free clinic
network is integral to
the solution.**

