

FY26 Public Budget Testimony

Alycia Post 2/20/2025

Hello, my name is Alycia Post, and I am the co-director of outpatient services at Washington County Mental Health Services in Berlin, Vermont. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here to advocate for a 6.2% Medicaid rate increase, amounting to \$13.95 million in general funds, for designated and specialized service agencies like ours. This funding is critical to maintaining essential services for Vermonters needing mental health, substance use, and I/DD supports.

We deeply appreciate the state's recognition of our role in supporting the most vulnerable members of our community. Your commitment to mental health and substance use care and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities is vital, and we are grateful for your continued support.

A 6.2% increase is crucial for sustaining the work we do. Our services include things like trauma treatment, providing individual and group therapy, case management, and dyadic work for children impacted by trauma. We also offer programs like re-entry services for individuals involved in the correctional system, as well as evidence-based therapies like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing.

The demand for our services is growing, and recently we faced a 9-month waitlist. With high caseloads, complex needs, and a lack of competitive wages, we are struggling to retain skilled staff. Fewer people are entering the field of therapy, and many who do can earn more in private practice. This leads to increased strain on our resources, making it harder to provide timely, effective care.

When outpatient services like ours are underfunded, people end up in crisis situations, which are far more expensive and less effective in the long term. It's like not having a primary care doctor—without preventive, ongoing care, people turn to emergency services when their needs escalate. While emergency care is essential, it's not a substitute for upstream supports.

A 6.2% rate increase will ensure that agencies like ours can continue providing these vital services and meet the growing needs of our community. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this urgent matter.

**Alycia Post, Washington County Mental Health Services**