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People & Possibilities



Volume 3, Issue 2

**LIFE WITH
A MENTAL
ILLNESS**

LEARN
about it.
ACT
B4Stage4.
SHARE
with #mentalillnessfeelslike.



mentalhealthamerica.net/may

LCMHS will once again celebrate May as Mental Health Month in 2016. Mental Health America, a leader in the observance of May as Mental Health Month, has chosen **Life with a Mental Illness** as the theme for 2016. (See inside this newsletter for more information on this theme.) LCMHS will be celebrating as well with activities, community outreach, and more. Check our website and Facebook page for more information about upcoming events.

LCMHS Zumbathon® April 30

LCMHS is organizing its first ever LCMHS Zumbathon® fundraiser! Our Zumbathon will be held at 2:00 p.m., Saturday, April 30, 2016, at Lamoille Union High School. Please help us make this event successful by participating and by spreading the word! Registration is \$20 per person; donations are welcome.



If you or your business would like to sponsor our event or donate raffle prizes, please visit our (brand new!) website at www.lamoille.org.

 **YAY
HOORAY!**

.....our shiny.....
**NEW SITE
IS LIVE!**

Our website has had a makeover! The look and navigation of the site are new, and we've made information more accessible. Some pages are still in progress, but please visit our site frequently as more content about LCMHS and our services becomes available. There's even an easy way to support LCMHS through your tax-deductible donation!

www.lamoille.org



ASD
affects
1 in 68
children.

Boys are
4 times
more likely
to have
ASD than
girls.

Children
can be
diagnosed
with ASD as
early as **age**
2.

Autism Treatment in Vermont Schools: A Gap Between Research & Practice

Tristan J. McNamara, Ed.D.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) continues to receive increasing degrees of national attention in parallel with increasing rates of occurrence. The disorder's growing prevalence has been accompanied by controversies regarding the source of the disorder, how it is diagnosed, and what treatments are applicable and effective. ASD is currently diagnosed on behavioral observations alone, as a biological assessment has yet to be developed.

While the causes behind the emergence of ASD remain hidden, there is no shortage of treatment methods. A wide range of interventions exists, including those founded on research that demonstrates their effectiveness and those that lack clinical validation (e.g., claims to cure ASD via diet changes, curing the symptoms of ASD through swimming with dolphins, and so forth). Researchers suggest that treatments such as diets, or those promising extraordinary outcomes, may be more readily accepted by some because of their straightforward, scientific-sounding nature, in contrast to multidisciplinary approaches, which can often be confusing and complicated. In some cases, strategies

that may hold benefit for individuals with an ASD are misunderstood as a cure, as opposed to an effort to improve quality of life or alleviate specific symptoms.

There exists a substantial gap between research and practice in regards to ASD treatment in Vermont school districts. For example, interventions categorized as unestablished treatments (i.e., treatments for which there is little or no evidence to support firm conclusions about their effectiveness), such as facilitated communication, auditory integration training, and sensory integration, are used to some degree by 63.16%, 63.16%, and 100% of districts, respectively. Treatments that have been scientifically proven to have favorable outcomes,

such as the regular use of applied behavior analysis, modeling, schedules, and self management, appear to be used in less than 50% of school districts in Vermont.

Regardless of what educators, parents, and/or mental health professionals believe to be effective, research has demonstrated that each individual case of ASD requires a collaborative effort between treatment providers and parents, with parents serving as integral, respected partners. School

“Treatments that have been scientifically proven to have favorable outcomes ... appear to be used in less than 50% of school districts in Vermont.”

Do You Know What Mental Illness Feels Like?

We often hear the clinical terms used by doctors and other professionals to identify the symptoms of mental illnesses...but if someone hasn't gone through it, would they know how to recognize it?

So often, clinical terms don't do justice to what *life with a mental illness* feels like. We know that two people with the same diagnosis can experience the same symptom and describe it in very different ways. Understanding the signs of a mental illness and identifying how it can feel can be confusing—and sometimes can contribute to ongoing silence or hesitation to get help.

It's important for people to talk about how it feels to live with a mental illness. We know that mental illnesses are common and treatable, and help is available. But not everyone knows what to look for when they are going through those early stages, and many simply experience symptoms differently. We all need to speak up early—*Before Stage 4*—and in real, relatable terms so that people do not feel isolated and alone.

This May is Mental Health Month; LCMHS is raising awareness of the importance of speaking up about mental health, and asking individuals to share what *life with a mental illness* feels like by tagging social media posts with the tag **#mentalillnessfeelslike**. Posting with our hashtag is a way to speak up, to share your point of view with people who may be struggling to explain what they are going through—and to help others figure out if they too are showing signs of a mental illness.

Life with a Mental Illness is meant to help remove the shame and stigma of speaking out, so that more people can be comfortable coming out of the shadows and seeking the help they need. Whether you are in Stage 1 and just learning about those early symptoms, or are dealing with what it means to be in Stage 4, sharing how it feels can be part of your recovery.

#mentalillnessfeelslike



Share what it's like for you by tagging your social media posts with **#mentalillnessfeelslike**.

See what others are saying at mentalhealthamerica.net/feelslike where you can also submit anonymously.

LCMHS wants everyone to know that mental illnesses are real, that recovery is always the goal, and that the best prospects for recovery come when we act *Before Stage 4* (*B4Stage4*).

Addressing mental illnesses *B4Stage4* means more than burying feelings and refusing to talk about them, and waiting for symptoms to clear up on their own. *B4Stage4* means more than wishing that mental health problems aren't real, and hoping that they will never get worse. *B4Stage4* means more than thinking that someone on the edge of a crisis will always pull himself or herself back without our help, and praying that someone else will intervene before a crisis occurs.

B4Stage4 means, in part, talking about what mental illnesses feel like, and then acting on that information. It means giving voice to feelings and fears, and to hopes and dreams. It means empowering people as agents of their own recovery. And it means changing the trajectories of our own lives for the better, and helping those we love change theirs. So let's talk about what *life with a mental illness* feels like, to voice what we are feeling, and so others can know they are not alone.

Get informed. Get screened. Get help.



B4Stage4 **MHA**
Mental Health America

Green Mountain Care Board Confirms Underfunding

In the Green Mountain Care Board's review of the Howard Center budget (as a designated agency sample budget), the GMCB agreed that the DA system is, in fact, significantly underfunded, even though "the community-based services the DAs and SSAs provide are necessary to control the overall cost of care by reducing the need for hospitalization and more acute, expensive services and, more importantly, to serve the needs of some of our most vulnerable Vermonters." At right are some examples of the effect of this underfunding on the DA system.

DS Consumer Receives Leadership Certificate

Tara Audet, an LCMHS DS consumer, recently received a Vermont Leadership Series Certificate of Completion. Roy Gerstenberger, the Developmental Disability Services Division Director from DAIL, presented the certificate to Tara during Disability Awareness Day at the Vermont State House in Montpelier.



Jennifer Stratton (DS), Tara Audet, and Savi Van Sluytman

The Vermont Leadership Series is an intensive, three-weekend training for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities or their family members. It is designed for people who feel comfortable speaking up, who listen well to others, who are open to new ideas, and who are eager to make a difference in their community. Participants receive training from experts in the field, connect with other leaders, discover and learn ways to make positive changes, and learn leadership skills. To become a leadership participant one must be nominated by one of the advocacy or support organizations for individuals with developmental disabilities in Vermont.

If you would like to learn more about the Vermont Leadership Series, please contact our Developmental Services Director, Jennifer Stratton, at jennifers@lamaille.org.

New Facebook Page!

Check out our new Facebook page—you will find news, photos, and updates for all of our programs and services. Please "like" us and check in frequently to stay up-to-date on what's going on at LCMHS and in Lamoille County.



42%
of people with a mental illness face stigma and discrimination at least once a month

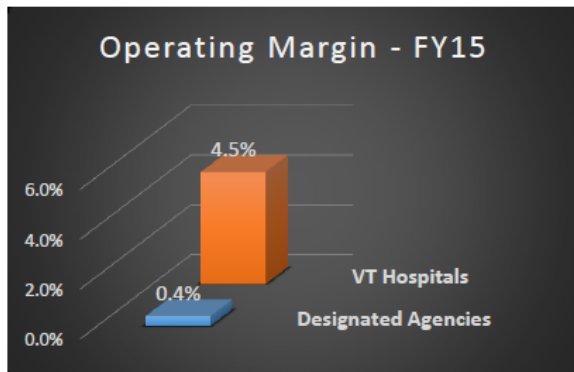
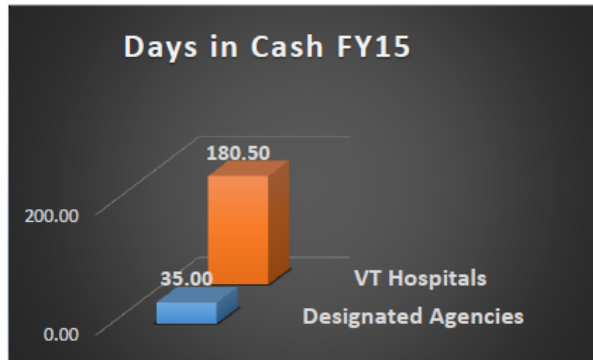


58%
of sufferers say the stigma and discrimination is as damaging or harder to deal with than the illness itself



63%
of adults know someone with a mental health problem

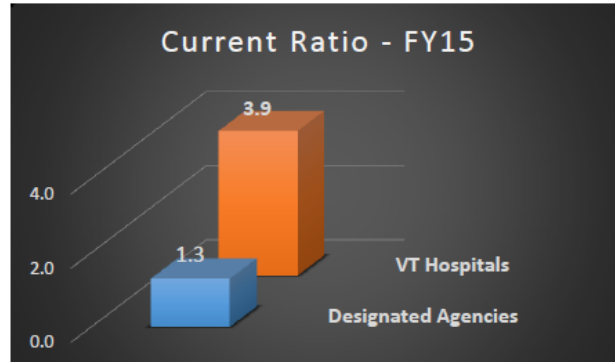
Agency days in cash on hand has decreased by 28.6% over the past five years



Operating margins for DAs have declined by 79% over the past five years

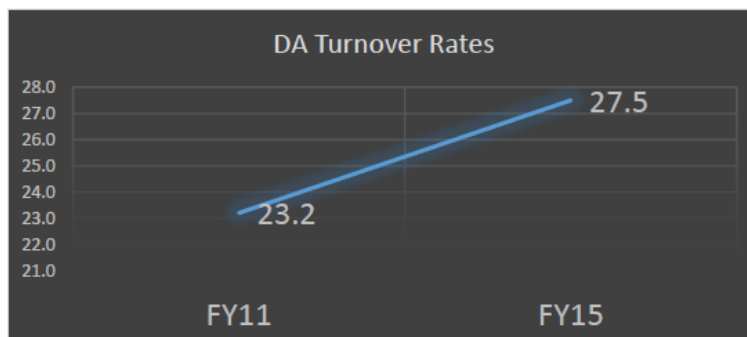


Net Assets have decreased by 8% over the past five years



Services are suffering...

In a field where our success is based on relationships, the average turnover rate for the DA/SSA system is now 27.5% annually – an increase of 22% over the past five years



Press Conference on Mental Health Funding

On February 25, 2016, Vermont Care Partners held a press conference at the Vermont State House to inform the public about the impact of underfunding the designated agency system. VCP shared the stories of some of the over 35,000 Vermonters who use developmental, substance use, and mental health services, as well as stories from staff, board members and community partners. Mary Moulton, Director of Washington County Mental Health Services, led off the press conference by describing the impact of underfunding on those we serve and how agencies are losing the ability to keep businesses afloat.

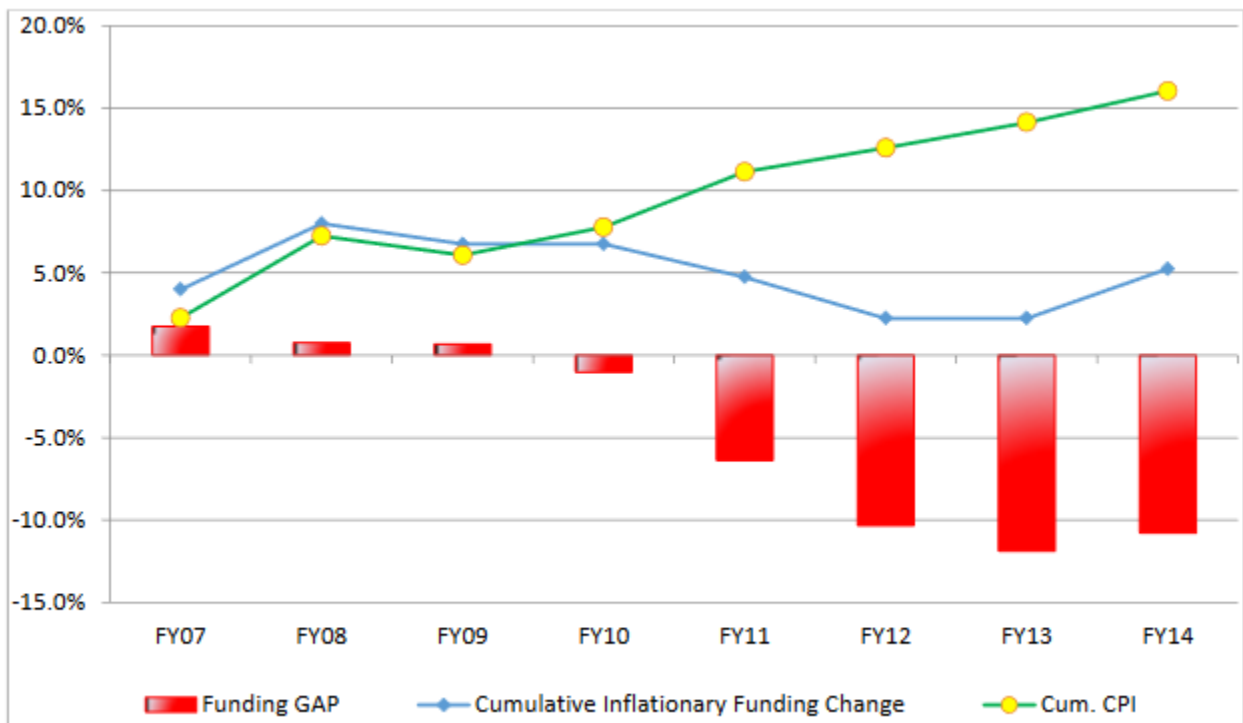


Julie Tessler, Executive Director of VCP, speaks at the press conference on February 25.

The press conference ended with a moving description by Wilda White, the Executive Director of Vermont Psychiatric Survivors, of how underfunding mental health is a form of discrimination. Self-advocates, family and staff who addressed how crucial it is to have adequate resources for maintaining qualified staff and trusting relationships to provide effective services.

Vermont Care Partners is the trade association of 16 non-profit community-based agencies that serve Vermonters affected by developmental disabilities, mental health conditions and substance use disorders. Lamoille County Mental Health Services is a member of the

Vermont Care Partners.



The chart above demonstrates how large the gap between the Consumer Price Index and funding in the DA/SSA system has grown since FY07—funding for organizations like LCMHS is not keeping up with inflation.

Mental Health Advocacy Day

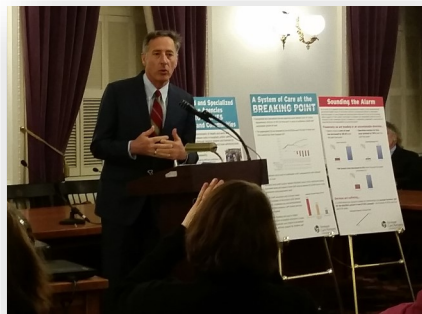
Vermont Care Partners and other mental health associations teamed with over 30 other advocates and providers to celebrate Mental Health Advocacy Day at the State House on March 17, 2016.

Governor Peter Shumlin, Secretary (of the Agency of Human Services) Hal Cohen, Commissioner Frank Reed, and numerous other state leaders spoke and reaffirmed their commitment to mental health and substance abuse care and treatment to over 100 attendees. Julie Tessler, Executive Director of Vermont Care Partners, called for a 3% Medicaid rate increase for Designated and Specialized Services Agencies.

Testimony was also presented in several Committees to educate multiple legislators about the work of Designated and

Specialized Service Agencies. For instance, Bob Thorn, Executive Director of Counseling Services of Addison County, testified before the House Human Services Committee, focusing on two critical forces impacting our system of care: (1) the opportunities created by payment reform and the exciting things we are doing to drive vastly improved outcomes for families and individuals and to encourage integrated and holistic care; and (2) the financial weakening of our system and the related erosion of our work force which is having a significant adverse impact on services and is likely to worsen.

Mary Moulton, Executive Director of Washington County Mental Health Services, spoke to the House Health Care Committee on eliminating stigma, our work on health reform, the impact of underfunding, and progress on RBA and outcomes.



FREE Youth Mental Health First Aid Class



Youth Mental Health First Aid is a class designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders.

LCMHS is offering this class, taught by certified instructors, on **May 14, 2016**, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at our offices at 72 Harrel Street in Morrisville. There is no cost to attend this important training. If you would like to attend or need additional information, please contact Luciana Swenson at luciana.swenson@lamoille.org.

Welcome, Mary Anne Lewis! Introducing Our Newest Board Member

Mary Anne Lewis, a Stowe business owner, has joined the board of directors at LCMHS. Mary Anne owns The Brass Lantern Inn, a bed and breakfast in Stowe. She is also been licensed as an occupational therapist for over 30 years and has worked at hospitals and schools in Ohio and Maryland.

Mary Anne also has significant experience in the area of developmental services. She participated on the Vermont Health Care Task Force Inclusion project. This group, composed of parents, physicians, advocates, therapists and nurses, advocates for better health care for Vermonters who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. She has gained other significant experience navigating the mental health and development services systems, as well. Mary Anne is a well-informed, involved addition to our board of directors and we appreciate her willingness to serve.



Therapy Group for Girls

The Children, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS) division conducts a Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) group for girls. The group is led by Miranda Bevins, a child therapist, with the assistance of a case manager and other LCMHS staff. We are eagerly exploring starting a DBT group for boys soon, as well.



DBT is a form of therapy that uses a strong clinical relationship to target non-adaptive coping behaviors and replace them with skills from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and traditions of mindful practice. It is particularly suited to clients who suffer from extreme behaviors (for instance, self-harm, suicidal ideation, interpersonal distress) because allows those clients to learn coping skills central to distress tolerance, interpersonal behavior, and emotional regulation in a group setting.

If you would like more information about DBT or would like to make a child or adolescent referral, please contact Miranda Bevins at 802-888-5026.

Paper Tigers Film at JSC

LCMHS is teaming with local community partners to present the film *Paper Tigers* at Johnson State College (Bentley Hall) on Monday, April 25, 2016, in the evening.

Paper Tigers follows a year in the life of an alternative high school that has radically changed its approach to disciplining its students, becoming a promising model for how to break the cycles of poverty, violence and disease that affect families.

“Stressed brains can’t learn.” That was the nugget of neuroscience that Jim Sporleder, principal of a high school riddled with violence, drugs and truancy, took away from an educational conference in 2010. Three years later, the number of fights at Lincoln Alternative High School had gone down by 75% and the graduation rate had increased five-fold.

Paper Tigers is the story of how one school made such dramatic progress. Following six students over the course of a school year, we see Lincoln’s staff try a new approach to discipline: one based on understanding and treatment rather than judgment and suspension. Using a combination of vérité and revealing diary cam footage, *Paper Tigers* is a testament to what the latest developmental science is showing: that just one caring adult can help break the cycle of adversity in a young person’s life.

districts, however, often face a significant challenge in their attempts to implement the recommendations emerging from research.

Some research has identified that in Vermont, this gap between research and practice is attributable to factors such as the education of educators and administrators and the way they utilize scientific principles; the availability of resources; and more prominently, challenges in how special educators (and people in general) process, use, and interpret knowledge.



In addition, there are challenges associated with the research on this issue. Often, outcomes associated with research that uses self-reporting by parents and professionals may be affected by the role that belief and hope play in determining the effectiveness of the treatment. In other words, parents and professionals may often report that a treatment was successful, even though it was not, because they wish it to be.

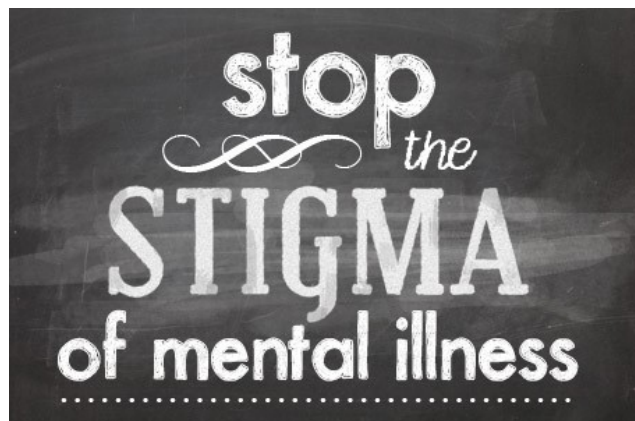
Additionally, determining the effectiveness of a treatment is more difficult because of the variables of the home and school environments that may affect the success of the treatment.

Despite these difficulties, evidence-based practices—interventions supported by literature—can be established by integrating clinical expertise/expert opinion, external scientific evidence, and client/caregiver perspectives. The importance of quality research literature in providing guidance around what practices are effective, and which are not, is a central concept of evidence-based practices.

Resources such as the National Autism Center's *National Standards Report* provide comprehensive reviews of contemporary interventions, classified by each intervention's degree of support found in research.

Strengthening our knowledge base, incorporating the use of scientific principles, and practicing critical evaluation of what we accept as knowledge, may help us, as practitioners and community partners, to establish proven ASD interventions and treatments in our schools and to promote more positive outcomes.

Dr. Tristan McNamara serves as a school-based therapist and clinical manager for LCMHS, and completed his research on ASD treatment in Vermont schools as his doctorate in education degree. He is currently considering future research and publication while he makes cutting boards in his basement.





Lamoille County Mental Health Services

Children, Youth & Family Services

CYFS Director

The CYFS director, a member of the agency's senior leadership team, is responsible for the success of the day-to-day operations of the CYFS program, and insures that the CYFS division is providing quality programs, services, and supports to children, adolescents, and families through our various programs. *Licensing as psychotherapist or psychologist and experience with children's mental illness, as well as supervisory experience required.*

Behavior Interventionist

Behavior Interventionists are responsible for one-on-one therapeutic interventions in school and community settings with school-aged children who have developmental disabilities, emotional and/or behavioral disorders. *Bachelor's degree is preferred.*

Outpatient Therapist

The Outpatient Therapist provides assessment, and individual and group outpatient counseling to children, adolescents, and their families, along with some case management. The incumbent would need to have strong clinical skills and be able to work on complex teams. *Minimum Qualifications: Licensed or rostered as a psychotherapist; at least 1 years' experience working with children with emotional and/or behavioral disorders & their families.*

Emergency Services

Alcohol & Substance

Awareness Program Screener

The ASAP Screener works directly with clients to provide assessment, referral, and follow-up services for alcohol and substance abuse as indicated as part of LCMHS' public inebriate program.

Adult Behavioral Health

Residential Support Staff

LCMHS has immediate openings for full-time Residential Support Staff at both our Group Home in Johnson and at Copley House in Morrisville. Our residential staff works as part of a team to maintain a caring, safe, and therapeutic environment for residents. Responsibilities may include implementation of treatment plans, daily log notes, cooking, and shopping.

Substitute Support Staff

LCMHS is looking for individuals to work on an on-call, as-needed basis in supporting our consumers in the community and at our residential facilities.

Medical Director

The Medical Director provides psychiatric services to identified consumers of LCMHS, and maintains medical responsibility for LCMHS consumers. He or she will also regularly provide case and program consultation and review individual

treatment plans in accordance with state, federal and agency regulations. *Minimum Qualifications: MD and licensing in the state of Vermont; board certification in psychiatry.*

Developmental Services

Lead Community Integration Specialist

The Lead CIS is responsible for training and mentoring CIS. He or she also provides support and services to persons with developmental disabilities, based on the consumer's need for support in the community, in employment, and/or in their home. This position requires a rotation of evening and weekend hours and a flexible schedule. *At least 1 year of experience as a CIS in the LCMHS Developmental Services division required.*

In-home Support Staff

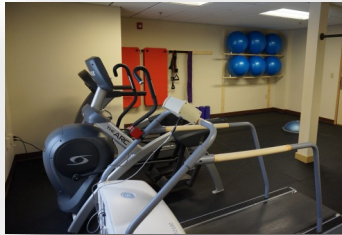
The in-home support staff is responsible for one-on-one supports in a home working with a child on daily living skills while also engaging him in different activities. We are currently looking for 1 or 2 staff who would be interested in working Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. and/or 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The agency provides ongoing training and supports.

**Please send your resume & cover letter to
jobs@lamoille.org**

A Great Place to Work

The new LCMHS **Employee Gym** opened on January 11! Use of the gym is free to our employees and is a great addition to the long list of benefits we provide to LCMHS employees, making LCMHS one of the best places to work in Lamoille County.

In addition to our Employee Gym, LCMHS offers its eligible employees health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, short- and long-term disability insurance, flexible spending, a 401(k) plan, and generous paid leave time.



Are you interested in helping individuals be more independent and have a better quality of life? Want a meaningful career? Apply to join the LCMHS team by emailing your resume and cover letter to jobs@lamoille.org—where people and possibilities come together.

Support LCMHS

LCMHS serves children, youth, families, and adults, providing treatment and supports—at home, in school, and at work. No one is turned away, regardless of their ability to pay. However, the need for LCMHS' services continues to grow at a rate that outpaces the state's ability to fund them.

Support from our donors is absolutely vital to ensuring that LCMHS can continue to provide life-changing services and care to Lamoille County.

You can help by donating on our website (we accept credit cards) at www.lamoille.org or by sending your gift to:

LCMHS
Attn: Savi Van Sluytman
72 Harrel St.
Morrisville, VT 05661

“**MENTAL ILLNESS**
is nothing to be
ashamed of,
but stigma and bias
shame us ALL.”
- Bill Clinton

LCMHS Receives Governor's Award

LCMHS was one of only 22 Vermont employers receiving Governor Shumlin's Award for Excellence in Worksite Wellness in the 151-500 Employee category. Overall, 67 employers received this award, presented by Governor Shumlin himself, on March 30, 2016. The Award for Excellence in Worksite Wellness honors employers who demonstrate innovative practices to improve the lives of Vermont citizens.

LCMHS joined the ranks of other well-known Vermont employers, such as those listed below, in receiving this award:

A.N. Deringer, Inc.
Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Vermont
Champlain College
King Arthur Flour
MyWebGrocer
Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc.
The Vermont Country Store
United Counseling Service of Bennington County



Sherry Jones (DS), Megan Roy (Redwood), and Savi Van Sluytman at the Worksite Wellness Conference.

LAMOILLE COUNTY
MENTAL HEALTH
SERVICES

Board of Directors

- Beverly Allen
- Will Angier
- Nancy Durand
- Michael Jansen
- Lori Jones
- Ted Lambert
- Mary Anne Lewis
- Sharon Menard
- Fred Ober
- Chip Troiano
- Francinne Valcour
- David Vinick

Upcoming Events

- Board Meeting April 20
- LCMHS Zumbathon April 30
- Radio Spot-WLVB May 4
- Radio Spot-WLVB May 11
- Mental Health First Aid May 14
- NAMI Mental Health Advocacy Day May 17
- Radio Spot-WLVB May 18
- Board Meeting May 18
- Radio Spot-WLVB May 25
- *Memorial Day May 30
- Flag Day June 14
- Board Meeting June 15

*The Agency is closed on these holidays.

Advice for Health Care Providers

One of the groups in the Vermont Leadership Series (see page 2) recently designed a pamphlet called “Partnership in Patient Care for Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities,” designed to give information to medical care providers about working with patients who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. In the pamphlet, the group provided “7 Points of Disability Etiquette:”



1. Communicate effectively.
2. Allow additional time for the appointment.
3. Do not touch any part of my equipment or mobility devices without asking first.
4. Don't make assumptions about me.
5. Encourage the use of comforters (be aware of sensory issues and allow for safe exploration of the room and equipment).
6. Offer auxiliary aids/services (sign language interpreter, Computer-Assisted Real Time Text, for example).
7. Refer me for recommended health screenings.

It is important for all health care providers to receive training and information on treating individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities so that those individuals can receive complete and appropriate health care. For more information, please contact our Developmental Services Director, Jennifer Stratton, at jennifers@lamoille.org.



Lamoille County Mental Health Services
72 Harrel St.
Morrisville, VT 05661