

Mental Health: The Futures Project

The Facts About Mental Illness

FACT:

Mental illnesses are among the most prevalent, burdensome and costly chronic conditions.

FACT:

Mental disorders rank first among illnesses that cause disability in the United States, Canada and Western Europe.

FACT:

Treatment for mental illness is very effective and people recover.

FACT:

In a given year, an estimated 12–13% of adults, nearly 60,000 Vermonters, have a moderately serious mental disorder.

FACT:

Mental and substance abuse disorders commonly co-occur. In Vermont, an estimated 39,000 adults have co-occurring disorders.

FACT:

Mental illnesses are often relapsing conditions characterized by acute and less acute phases of illness.

Sources:

Vermont Department of Health; New England Journal of Medicine; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services; U.S. Census Bureau



Mental health is essential to overall health – and

Vermont is a leading state in implementing nationally recognized best practices within its community service delivery system for people with mental illness and substance abuse treatment needs.

Mental illness is a chronic disease. Only by working to better integrate treatment and care for people with mental illness and substance abuse problems into the health care system can we reduce the stigma often associated with these conditions – and see the best possible outcomes for Vermonters.

That's what the Futures Project is all about.

The goal of the Futures Project is to create and connect 21st century in-patient services with an enhanced community-based treatment system.

Background

For nearly 115 years, the Vermont State Hospital has cared for the state's most seriously mentally ill people.

At its peak in 1952, the average daily census was 1,350 patients. Since then the hospital has steadily downsized, as the number of community-based programs has grown.

The Role of the State Hospital

The State Hospital treats Vermonters who have acute severe mental illness and are clinically determined to need in-patient care. It is the only hospital in the system that will not refuse to admit a seriously ill patient who cannot be treated elsewhere.

The State Hospital functions as a psychiatric intensive care unit, and is a safety net for the entire system of care. Each year, there are approximately 200 admissions and discharges. The daily census ranges from 45–54 patients. Average length of stay for a patient is 68 days.

Moving beyond the State Hospital

The current hospital facility is located at the Brooks Building in the Waterbury State Office Complex. Built in 1939, the physical plant is increasingly inadequate, as resources dedicated to the hospital have not kept pace with the changing needs and requirements for modern in-patient care – and the hospital's hard-working staff faces daily challenges as they try to provide the highest quality care.

In 2003, following two patient suicides and a series of failed inspections, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services decertified the hospital. The U.S. Department of Justice investigated the hospital and found violations of patients' rights. Since that time, the State has made significant changes to the hospital and to the services delivered there.

The Futures Project envisions closing the Vermont State Hospital by 2012. Until then, it is imperative that improvements continue

to be made at the hospital, so that the highest possible quality of care is provided to patients as we move toward replacing its functions.

Community agencies provide the majority of care

Vermont has worked over the past two decades to enhance its community-based services. The 10 Designated Agencies of the community mental health system provide most of the state's out-patient care. As with health services for other chronic conditions, the out-patient treatment system offsets in-patient admissions, benefiting the state's health care system as a whole. This system of community-based care has a record of excellent outcomes, and it is highly valued by Vermonters.

The Futures Project envisions a new in-patient system of care that is effectively integrated with an enhanced system of community-based out-patient care.

Vision

Vermonters share a common vision for mental health care.

People with mental illness and substance abuse disorders are just that – people. They are our friends, our neighbors, our family, and ourselves.

The Futures Project is built upon broad consensus of its stakeholders, including mental health professionals, consumers, the Vermont Legislature and the Administration. All agree that the existing State Hospital facility must be replaced.

The Futures Project envisions a continuum of care that offers an effective array of mental health treatment and support services that are fully integrated with substance abuse services, health care and medical treatment – all to help Vermonters who have mental illnesses achieve recovery.

The Futures Project envisions:

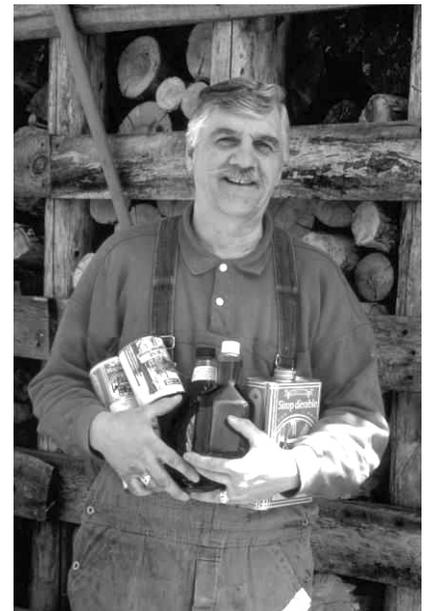
- Closing the current Vermont State Hospital facility by 2012
- Locating new in-patient programs in

collaboration with existing tertiary, community and specialty hospitals

- Developing a new array of in-patient and out-patient community and rehabilitation services

The Futures Project guiding principles:

- Services are high quality and provided in a holistic, comprehensive continuum of care
- Consumers are treated at all times with dignity and respect
- Individual rights are protected
- Public resources are allocated efficiently and effectively
- Services of the Health Department, the Agency of Human Services, and community partners are person- and family-centered
- Services are accessible and culturally competent
- Interventions must reflect the most integrated and least restrictive alternatives necessary



The Futures Plan

In 2004, the General Assembly, building on an Administration study and its own long standing commitment to the delivery of quality mental health care in a safe environment, created a Futures Advisory Committee, and instructed the Secretary of Human Services to consult with the Committee to create a strategic plan for replacement of the State Hospital. The result is the Vermont State Hospital Futures Plan.

The Futures Plan is a comprehensive call for new investments in the essential community capacities and for relocating the 54 beds currently at the State Hospital. The new service array would include in-patient, rehabilitation and residential services for adults, all designed to address the critical needs of some of Vermont's most vulnerable citizens.

Key Elements of the Plan

- 50 new in-patient treatment beds to provide both intensive and specialized care
- Creation of additional community

residential recovery and treatment programs

- New crisis beds for stabilization and diversion from hospital care
- Development of an integrated care management program across the delivery system
- Additional resources for peer programming, supportive housing and legal services

Broad stakeholder participation is a hallmark of the Futures Project. A key partner in the project's implementation is the Futures Advisory Committee. Made up of multiple stakeholders, the committee includes mental health professionals, consumers and advocates, community-based organizations, and the state's hospitals.

At any given time there are five to six work groups of the Committee engaged in providing input and recommendations to the planning process. This collaborative process has been critical to moving forward with the Futures Project.

Both the Administration and the Legislature have made improving services for Vermonters with mental illness a high priority, helping drive the

early successes of the Futures Project. The Legislature is a leading participant in the process through the Mental Health Oversight Committee, the Joint Fiscal Committee, and the standing jurisdictional committees. It established the framework for the project in the FY2005 budget, directing the Agency of Human Services to:

- Plan to replace the State Hospital
- Enhance safety and support clinical programming at the State Hospital
- Sustain and enhance the network of community programs

These policy directives and subsequent appropriations acts will enable the state to achieve its vision for mental health care in Vermont.

Futures Project Work Groups

The Futures Project creates a variety of work groups to address ongoing and specific issues. Not all groups are active at all times. Several have met their primary charge and are currently inactive, others continue with their efforts, and new groups may be formed as the need arises.

Reports, minutes, and agendas for each work group are available on the Mental Health Futures Project Home Page at the Health Department web site.

<http://healthvermont.gov/mh/futures/futureshome.aspx>

Examples of a few of the work groups include:

Burlington Site Review

This group met over the summer and fall of 2006 to review considerations about potential site placements for a new in-patient facility on the Fletcher Allen campus.

Clinical Care Management

This group is charged with developing the principles, criteria and protocols for client movement across the system of care.

Community Advisory Group Second Spring Program, Williamstown

The Advisory Group provides ongoing opportunities for mental health stakeholders and community members to have input concerning the operation of Vermont's first newly developed community residential program.

Crisis Bed Development

This group worked to define the need for crisis beds and emergency services in a transformed mental health system. Its report was presented in October 2006.

Housing Development

This multi-stakeholder work group was charged to identify housing needs and appropriate housing options for mental health consumers.

In-patient Programs

This group developed a set of criteria for the new in-patient programs to replace the State Hospital, recommending that a new in-patient program be located at or adjacent to a hospital, preferably a tertiary level academic medical center. These criteria were approved by the Futures Advisory Committee and adopted by the Administration.

Peer Support Program Development

Responsible for developing recommendations to enhance the ways in which people who live with mental illness (peers) are involved in providing direct support to people with serious mental illness.

Vermont State Hospital Employees Work Group

The report by this group explored the range of options for the future of the State Hospital staff and provides recommendations about how best to enable the transition of the hospital employees to the new in-patient programs.

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Achievements

State Hospital Improvements

The 2004 Legislature funded program improvements and facility renovations, improving patient safety at the Vermont State Hospital, augmenting appropriations to the Department of Buildings and General Services for this work. Significant investments have also been made to increase staffing at the State Hospital during the transition period.

Futures Advisory Planning

FY2005 budget created the Futures Advisory Committee, and set out planning principles and specific recommendations. Futures Advisory Committee, Mental Health Oversight Committee and the Joint Fiscal Committee vote in support of the Futures Plan.

Funding Futures

Act 147 appropriates \$1M for continued planning, design and permitting expenditures required to replace the Vermont State Hospital. The legislature also appropriated \$100,000 in the Capitol Bill to address additional patient safety concerns, patient management improvements and environmental enhancements.

Conceptual Certificate of Need

Application to replace the State Hospital is ruled complete. The granting of this planning CON (expected by March 2007) will allow for the expenditure of funds and the next concrete steps toward the comprehensive and intensive planning required by the Futures Plan.

Second Spring Residential Care

The Second Spring Residential Care facility, scheduled to open in Williamstown in the spring of 2007, will serve 11 people previously at the Vermont State Hospital.

Plans for Community Capacity

Planning for additional community service capacity is underway to help reduce the census at the Vermont State Hospital.

Community Agencies

The Community Services System was enhanced with \$5.6 million for new community residential and recovery programs, peer support services, transportation and the development of the Care Management system. A 7.5 percent annual increase was granted for the Designated Agencies (Community Mental Health Centers) in FY '06, '07 and '08.



The Futures Project Work Group Reports & Recommendations are available on the Vermont Department of Health website:

<http://healthvermont.gov/mh/futures/futureshome.aspx>