

**REQUEST FOR APPLICANTS: An Independent Evaluation of the Implementation of Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint at the Vermont State Hospital and the Brattleboro Retreat**

**August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is seeking applications from experienced mental health or human service professionals/organizations to complete a performance evaluation of the state initiative to implement alternatives to seclusion and restraint (S/R) at the Vermont State Hospital (VSH) for adults with serious mental illness and the Brattleboro Retreat (BR) for children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. This initiative, funded through a federal grant<sup>1</sup> from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), will use SAMHSA's *Six Core Strategies for Reducing Seclusion and Restraint Use*<sup>2</sup> to guide the development and implementation of strategic plans at each hospital and will help create the culture shift necessary for the use of less coercive measures for ensuring patient and staff safety.

As part of the overall evaluation of this initiative, DMH will hire an independent evaluator to assist in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data regarding the following evaluation questions:

- 1) *Did stakeholders feel involved and satisfied with the planning and implementation process?*

Success of this initiative will require meaningful involvement of various stakeholders to ensure consensus and a well-informed planning process. As such, the evaluation of this project will include a formalized process to measure participant's level of involvement and satisfaction with the grant activities. DMH will work with the independent evaluator to develop a survey that can be used to assess if project participants felt involved in the process, if they had the right information to make decisions, and if they were satisfied with the initiative's process and progress. Participants to be surveyed will include: members of the VSH and BR steering committees that will be overseeing grant activities at those institutions, VSH and BR staff, as well as other interested advocates and stakeholders. Following the development of this survey, the independent evaluator will be responsible for distributing the survey to stakeholders at three points during the 3-year grant period and collecting and analyzing the responses to the survey. The results of the survey will be presented to the grant steering committees and staff and be used to inform the planning process.

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<sup>1</sup> A full copy of Vermont's grant application may be viewed at:  
<http://healthvermont.gov/mh/update/documents/samhsaproposal.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://www.nasmhpd.org/>

2) *What factors contributed to successful implementation of the Six Core Strategies and the reduction of S/R?*

The independent evaluator will work with DMH, VSH and the BR to plan and conduct targeted focus groups made up of different stakeholders to discuss and identify factors that contributed to successful implementation at the two inpatient programs involved in this grant. The evaluator will conduct focus groups composed of different stakeholders, including institutional staff, members of the VSH and BR steering committees, former patients, and advocates. Focus group participants will review evaluation data regarding the grant's progress and discuss factors contributing to achievement of grant goals. The independent evaluator will be responsible for compiling the results of the focus groups and providing summary reports to the project managers and steering committees. Focus groups will be held during the final six months of the grant.

### **Specifications of Work to be Completed**

The independent evaluator will be responsible for completing the following tasks over the three year period of the grant initiative:

- 1) Work with DMH to develop an involvement and satisfaction survey for the purposes of this grant initiative.
- 2) Distribute and collect the involvement and satisfaction survey to members of the grant steering committees and other pertinent stakeholders at three points during the grant project.
- 3) Compile the results of the survey and produce a summary report for project staff and steering committees.
- 4) Work with the project coordinator to design, plan and facilitate focus group sessions at VSH and BR. Focus groups will solicit feedback on which factors contributed to the success or failure of the initiative to achieve specific implementation goals. Focus groups will occur during the last six months of the grant period.
- 5) Compile results of focus groups and produce a summary report for review by the project staff and steering committees.

Interested applicants should submit letters of interest with the following information:

- ◆ applicant's experience and qualifications for performing the evaluation duties,
- ◆ a proposed three-year budget, which should include:
  - maximum number of hours anticipated for completing each of the tasks involved in the evaluation,
  - hourly (or daily) rate for work performed,
  - estimates of other expenses (for example, telephone calls, travel, postage) connected with carrying out the evaluation activities
- ◆ relevant supporting materials.

DMH will not accept proposed budgets of more than \$36,000 for completion of all work duties and expenses over the three year period of the grant (October 2008 to October 2011). Proposals must be received no later than the close of business on Thursday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008. DMH will only accept proposals submitted electronically by email. Proposals should be emailed to Joan Stasulis at the following address: [jstasul@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:jstasul@vdh.state.vt.us). Applicants will receive email confirmation that their proposal has been received.

DMH reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applicants. The proposals will be evaluated by staff of DMH, and, based on the applications received, DMH may ask to interview specific applicants. If an organization is selected to do the work, representatives of that organization will be invited to negotiate a contract. DMH will inform applicants of its decision by Friday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Questions concerning this RFA may be directed to Nick Nichols at 802-652-2000 or [nnichols@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:nnichols@vdh.state.vt.us).