

Dear Colleagues, Community Partners, and CSHN Families,

The beautiful fall weather has made the transition from summer a bit gentler this year. The warm days and colorful magic of the leaves offset the shorter daylight hours and now we find ourselves solidly standing in November and looking at stick season with Winter on the horizon. A change in the air, but if you live in Vermont you are accustomed to the ebb and flow of seasons and weather and time. We are resilient and focused as we enter the colder and darker months of Winter that serve as a reminder of the importance of community and preparation.

This month's CSHN *Connections* features the Care Consultation team and a bit more about them as people in your community. We also highlight the USDA Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children- which we know as WIC in our local health offices. And every issue of course provides resources for providers and families and important updates on Medicaid and policy.

In the coming months of gather and celebration and even hibernation- rely on the collective wisdom of community and the inevitable passing of light, to dark, to light again. May there be days of celebration and days of peace and joy in both.

CSHN Connections Team

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Ever pick up the phone or send an email then wonder, 'Who am I contacting'? We thought we'd ask our CSHN Care Coordinators to introduce themselves so you can get to know our team:

Marinell Newton is a Care Consultant serving Chittenden County, where she has dedicated more than 23 years to supporting families and partnering with community providers. She truly enjoys building relationships, helping people navigate resources, and being part of a strong, caring community.

Outside of work, Marinell lives with her husband and loves spending time with her two adult children and four grandchildren. She enjoys staying active—whether she's working out at the gym with friends, hiking, traveling, or sharing great food with the people she loves. Marinell is also an avid gardener and enjoys tending a local community garden alongside her neighbors. This year, she proudly harvested 49 butternut squash—one of her very favorite vegetables!

Jen Taylor is the Care Consultant who covers the middle/central part of the state. She lives with her husband and two black cats. Jen also has two children in their 20's. When she's not working, she enjoys reading, walking, camping, family and friend gatherings, and thrifting. This fall she is enjoying the beautiful foliage and the start of butternut squash soup season!

Stacia Cheney is the Care Consultant in the Northern part of the state. She lives with her son, Ian and their two kitties, Hank and Coco. Outside of work, Stacia enjoys spending time with her partner Trevor, family and friends. Stacia prefers to be out in nature and in the sunshine, preferably by the water. Stacia enjoys being just a bit outside of her comfort zone and enjoys weightlifting, training in martial arts, cold plunges and balances it with relaxing in the hot tub.

Deb Forrett is the Care Consultant in the southern part of the state. Deb and her husband have two adult children, one grandson, a dog, and a cat! She enjoys gardening, yoga, walking, and reading. Getting outside every day is a priority and she embraces each season- yes even winter! This fall Deb is enjoying comfort cooking- think breads, soups, and curries- and long walks in the woods.


White bowl containing orange butternut squash soup.

Here's Jen's Curried Butternut Soup recipe:

8 cups of peeled butternut squash (about 2 lbs)
Cooking spray
1 Tbsp butter
2 cups chopped peeled Granny Smith apple (about ¾ lb)
1 ½ C finely chopped onion
½ C thinly sliced celery
1 bay leaf
2 tsp curry powder (or to taste)
1 garlic clove minced (or to taste)
3 (14 ½ ounce) cans chicken broth
1/8 tsp salt
½ C (2 ounces) grated extra- sharp white cheddar cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees
2. Arrange squash in a single layer on a foul lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake at 400 degrees for 45 minutes or until tender.
3. Melt butter in a Dutch oven over medium-heat heat. Add apples, onion, celery, and bay leaf; sauté 10 minutes. Stir in curry powder and garlic, cook 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add squash, broth, and salt; stir well.
4. Reduce heat to medium- low, simmer, uncovered, 30 minutes. Discard bay leaf. Partially mash mixture with a potato masher until thick and chunky; stir well with a spoon. Top each serving with cheese. Yield: 4 servings (serving size 1 ½ cups soup and 2 Tbsp cheese)

Team Member’s adaptation…

Replace the curry powder with pumpkin spice powder. Do not use the bay leaf nor garlic clove. Add one more apple.

CSHN also has Care Consultants to help you. Want to reach the CSHN Care Consultant for your area? Local contact info is available on our website: CSHN Service Area.

Community Partner Spotlight:

Program Highlight: Women Infants and Children (WIC) Program

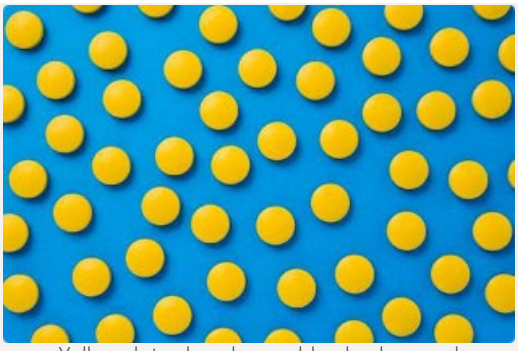
You can help ensure all your eligible families receive the benefits that WIC provides! You probably know that WIC helps eligible families get the healthy food they need to grow strong and stay well, but WIC offers so much more. WIC nutritionists provide personalized nutrition education to each participant. They also offer breastfeeding support, breast pumps, classes on topics like picky eating, and different food package options. In addition, when health care providers complete medical documentation, WIC may be able to provide medical formula.

The main contacts for WIC services across the state are the staff in the Health Department's District Offices. Health Department WIC staff:

- Help people join the WIC program and receive its benefits.
- Offer information and support to make the most of WIC benefits.
- Shop with participants to help identify eligible WIC items.
- Work in the community to increase participation through outreach, referrals, and retention activities.
- Provide nutrition education opportunities.
- Promote and support breastfeeding/chestfeeding through programs such as Promoting a Family-Friendly Workplace.

WIC is for income-eligible Vermont residents who are pregnant, recently pregnant, breastfeeding/chestfeeding, or have a new baby, and children under age 5. Parents, grandparents, and foster parents may apply for children in their care. If a parent or their child is on Medicaid, Dr. Dynasaur or 3SquaresVT/SNAP, they can join WIC. See Resources for Health Professionals to learn more about WIC for patients, including how to make a referral to WIC.

CSHN Updates



Yellow dots placed upon blue background

CSHN Updates

Yellow Dot Program

The Yellow Dot Program is a free program to help first responders get important medical information fast. When someone places a Yellow Dot decal sticker on their car window, it identifies a medical alert. It tells first responders to look for a yellow envelope with important medical information. Envelopes may include list of medicines and health conditions. This information can help first responders care for people quickly and correctly during an emergency event. Order your Yellow Dot here: Yellow Dot Kit Order Form

AHS.VDHCSHN@vermont.gov.

We hope you find this resource helpful!

Resources for Families



Family picking leaves off tree

Division of Vermont Healthcare Access - Reminders



Sticker white background green ribbon, QR code for StayCoveredVT.com

Medicaid Assisters Can Help

Do you or your patients need more information about Medicaid changes?

Friendly reminder to families and providers to keep checking for new Medicaid updates well into early 2027.

VermontHealthConnect.gov is a helpful site to visit if your family is new to Medicaid in Vermont.

Assisters can help, especially for younger adults, who may have never had to navigate through application processes. VermontHealthConnect.gov has information about finding and working with an Assister. Assisters are available via phone, online, and in person.

Regularly updated information on the Department of Vermont Health Access website gives folks already familiar with Medicaid even more information. This is also a good website to check back on regularly.

Providers can find all kinds of information at Provider Resources and Clinical Programs. The content contained on that website is updated as new information becomes available.

Local Libraries Hosting Medicaid Information Sessions

You may have seen in the news that libraries across the country and here in Vermont are working with local hospitals and healthcare organizations to provide information to their communities about upcoming Medicaid changes. For example, Brooks Memorial Library in Brattleboro is hosting some sessions throughout November and December. If this interests you, please check with your local library to see if they are hosting Medicaid information sessions.

PRACTICAL SELF-CARE TIPS FOR DE-STRESSING

As we approach the festivities that end the year, we may experience burnout especially as parents and caregivers of children who require additional needs. De-stressing is important so we can pour into ourselves and refresh before taking up more energy giving roles. De-stressing requires short practical self-care habits that fit into 30 minutes or less. The tips below will help in ensuring we prevent physical and mental burnout.

Quick Physical & Mental Resets

- Hot Showers: Step away for a warm shower using relaxing scents like lavender to ease muscle tension.
- Power Naps: Take a brief 30-minute nap to reset your body and boost your energy levels.
- Brisk Walks: Go for a short walk outside to release endorphins and clear your mind.
- Grounding Exercises: Practice the 3-2-1 technique, naming three things you see, two you feel, and one you hear, to calm your nervous system after a child's meltdown.
- Mindfulness and Breathing: Spend 10 minutes doing deep breathing exercises or guided meditation from resources like the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center.
- Positive Self-Talk: Replace unhelpful thoughts like "I am a bad parent" with compassionate mantras such as "I am doing my best" or "This moment will pass".
- Cognitive Reframing: View difficult events as manageable problems with a solution rather than focusing on the difficulty of managing your child's meltdown or comparing development to non-autistic peers.
- Micro-Journaling: Spend five to ten minutes every other night processing your feelings without stressing over missed entries.

Seasonal Fuel Assistance Program:

Assistance is for homeowners or renters who pay for heat or who have heat included in the rent (heated renters).

Applications: Please call our Benefits Service Center at 1-800-479-6151 for an application and to find out more. You can also visit our website at: DCF Fuel Benefits for more information. To apply online go to: www.mybenefits.vt.gov

Utility Discount Programs:

VT Gas Energy Assistance and Green Mountain Power's Energy Assistance Program

How do I apply for GMP and/or VGS Utility Discount Programs? Call 1-800-775-0516 to request an application. You can also download and print one directly from our website: http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/eap

Crisis Fuel Program:

Emergency fuel, and metered utility (electric and VT Gas Systems) disconnection, and furnace repairs or replacements. Crisis Fuel and After-Hours Emergency Fuel Program for Families with monthly GROSS income up to 200% of poverty level. Operates last Monday in November to last Friday in April.

Other Resource Assistance:

Find Help- Vermont Community Action Partnership

Vermont 211 – *Vermont 211* provides all people in Vermont with free access to community resources information and referral (I&R). This access includes personal assistance by telephone by dialing 211, by text, and through an online, searchable directory of services. Some resources include heating and fuel assistance, resources for mental health, food (including holiday meals), housing, substance use services, transportation, and so much more.

Vermont Foodbank – Vermont Foodbank gathers and shares quality food and nurtures partnerships to that no one in Vermont will go hungry. It is the state's largest hunger-relief organization and only food bank, providing nourishing food through a network of more than 300 community partners – food shelves, meal sites, senior centers, after-school programs, schools, and hospitals. Find a Food Shelf near you, and scroll down on this page for additional programs you might be interested in.

UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation

The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation (UHCCF) grant serves as a vital resource for families.
Direct financial support up to $5,000 per year for medical expenses and out-of-pocket expenses. Eligible expenses include medical treatments, surgeries, therapies (such as physical, speech, and occupational therapy), prescriptions, and medical equipment like wheelchairs or hearing aids.
Grants are awarded for children who are U.S. citizens and 16 years of age or younger and open to all eligible families who have coverage by a commercial health plan.
Parents can apply online at UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation

Please consider sharing these resources with the families you serve and others at your organizations.

Policy Corner



Calculator, silver pen, and stethoscope placed on top of paper medical bill.

Vermont Policy Updates

Medicaid Work Requirements – Proposed Policy is open for Public Comment

GCR 26-108 Medicaid Work Requirements Procedures is open for Public Comment through December 10, 2026. Interested parties can review the policy summary and procedures along with detailed information in the guidance document prior to that date.

DVHA November/December Advisory has a number of new changes and features for Gainwell billing. November/December 2026 DVHA Advisory provides comprehensive information.

Additional updates can be found in November 6, 2026 **Vermont Medicaid Banner**.

Proposed Policies

Proposed Rule – Newborn Screening Program is open for public comment through November 27, 2026. Public hearing is November 20, 2026 at 9am at 280 State Drive, Waterbury Vermont. There is a virtual option as well. Proposed Health Rule - Newborn Screening Program provides background policy and public comment information.

Proposed Policy GCR 26–106 Medicaid Investment No-Cost Extension of Designated and Specialized Service Agencies (DA/SSA) Workforce Investment is open for public comment through November 30, 2026. Proposed-DA-SA-CCBHC-Workforce-Investment document provides detailed information about the proposal as well as information for public comments.

Final Policies

Final Policy GCR 26-057 Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) Transition to Fee for Service Payment. DVHA changes to reimbursement for services is effective July 1, 2026.

Final Policy GCR 26-035 Certified Community-Based Integrated health Center (CCBHC) Demonstration Year Two Expansion. Designated agencies listed in this Final Policy will transition from the mental health monthly case rate to a PPS model effective July 1, 2026.

Final Policy GCR 26-046 Mental Health Case Rate Update. Update to this policy.

Recommend viewing this Final for more information if pertains to your work.

Final Policy GCR 26-050 Vermont's Medicaid Program increased Mental Health Fee-for-Service. The rate increase is 2.14% for funded services.

Final Policy GCR 26-060 Final Policy for Bundled Rate Increase for Northeastern Family Institute (NFI). This bundled rate increase took effect July 1, 2026.

Final Policy GCR 26-073 Establishing Temporary Rates for Adult Mental Health Residential and Crisis Bed Programs is effective July 1, 2026. This temporarily sets rates for Intensive Residential Recovery and Crisis Beds until the rates are finalized.

Final Policy GCR 26-082 DAIL – Adult Services Division Medicaid Rate Increase is posted effective July 1, 2026. This increase in funding by 1% is for home and community-based services delivered by DAIL's ASD.

Final Policy GCR 26-083 Establishing Mental Health Fee-for Service Rates for individuals receiving residential services. Mental Health FFS Rates policy summary gives detailed information.

Final Policy GCR 26-086 DAIL Medicaid Rate Increases effective July 1, 2026. Increased funding by 1% for services delivered for Developmental Disabilities Services Division.

Want to be added to **email notifications for Global Commitment waivers**? (Recommendation: If don't want to flood your Inbox, perhaps choose one person in your office or team to receive the emails for everyone.)

Please email AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov.

Community Happenings

Statewide

Upcoming Vermont Family Network Trainings

Vermont Family Network's (VFN)annual conference "**Connections and Crossroads: Building a Community of Support** "will be held April 28 at the University of Vermont Dudley H. Davis Center. Registration info will be shared when available.

The following VFN sessions are free, held on Zoom, and open to families and professionals.

12/10/26, 1:00-2:00 pm
Stronger Together: Expanding Adaptive Recreation Through Community Connections
This workshop explores how recreation can become more inclusive by looking beyond traditional programming and focusing on participation, belonging, and removing barriers. The presentation will share South Burlington's journey in developing adaptive recreation, from understanding community needs and training staff to building meaningful partnerships and creating opportunities for people of all abilities.
Register here: Stronger Together: Expanding Adaptive Recreation Through Community Connections

12/15/26, 2:00-3:00 pm
A Family Guide to Vermont's Designated Agencies Series – Part 3: How to Access Developmental Disabilities Services
Vermont's Developmental Disability Services System has undergone significant changes over the past year. In this webinar, we'll hear from experts representing each of the system's partner organizations to help families understand what these changes mean and how to access services and supports for their child. Together, we'll walk through each step of the process, from intake and eligibility to connecting with providers and accessing services. Families will leave with a clearer understanding of the system, what to expect along the way, and a practical roadmap for navigating Vermont's Developmental Disability Services System.
Register here: A Family Guide to Vermont's Designated Agencies Series – Part 3: How to Access Developmental Disabilities Services

Pathways to Partnership "Office Hours with Jayson Capobianco – Transition Consultant"

December 3 from 7:30am – 4:30pm. Join this monthly online welcoming space for support and collaboration about transitioning to adulthood.

Pathways to Partnership "Cookie Decorating Workshop". Several workshops for different age groups.

Chittenden County

Shelburne Museum Sensory Friendly Winter Lights

Sensory Friendly Winter Lights - Shelburne Museum December 14 from 4:30pm to 8:00 pm. Adult tickets $20, children over 3 years old $10. Tickets include Know Before You Go materials. Contact the museum if accessibility needs.

Mount Snow Adaptive at Snow – Winter Season opens December 12, 2026. Calendar | Adaptive Sports at Mount Snow shows the program schedule.

Looking for some indoor fun this winter? ECHO Leahy Center for Lake Champlain has Sensory-friendly Sundays. ECHO website has more information how to sign up and prepare for your visit.

Washington County

Merry Barre Holidays Craft Fair at the Barre City Auditorium on Saturday November 28 and Sunday November 29 is free and handicap accessible.

Windsor County

Check out the week's Playgroups on the **Upper Valley Playgroup and Caregiver Connections** site. See where to go play and connect here!

Special Needs Support Center (SNSC)
Adaptive Swim: Join SNSC and the Upper Valley Aquatic Center for a group adaptive swim class. Instructors are trained in Swim Angelfish adaptive. This class is great for all levels! Participants are welcome to enjoy the pool before and/or after the class. Email emma@snsc-uv.org to sign up.
Upper Valley Aquatic Center, 100 Arboretum Lane, White River Junction - 11/30, 12/7, 12/14, 10:45am-11:30am
Check out other activities hosted by the SNSC, like cooking, music, art, and peer/parent support groups.

If you need help accessing or understanding information in this newsletter, contact AHS.VDHCSHN@vermont.gov.

CSHN supports children with complex, chronic health conditions and/or developmental disorders, ages birth to-21, and their families, with flexible, experienced, and proactive services. If you'd like to learn more about CSHN programming and resources, please see the CSHN Website.

Do you have feedback or content for this newsletter? Please let us know!

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