
Behavioral Health Network of Vermont Newsletter

Vol. 1, Issue 3, June 2010



Cost-Saving “Telehealth” in Sync with Health Care Reform Efforts - How Can Critical Technology Be Brought to Vermont?

On February 5th, 2010, BHN held its third annual conference: Telemedicine and Distance Learning: Increasing Quality, Access and Collaboration in Vermont. The conference took place at the Sheraton Conference Center in Burlington Vermont and brought together clinicians, administrators, public policy directors and more.

After a very warm welcome from BHN Board President Linda Chambers, Mental Health Commissioner Michael Hartman and VDH Deputy Commissioner Barbara Cimaglio, the day began with an extremely well received and informative keynote address from Sue Sisley, MD from the Arizona Telemedicine Project. Through her dynamic personality and fascinating stories, Dr. Sisley provided an overview of the benefits of incorporating telehealth in a clinical setting and discussed the future use of telehealth. Assistant Director of Health Care Reform, Office of Vermont Health Access, Hunt Blair, followed with an honest and forthcoming update on health care policy in Vermont and an update on telehealth and its connection to state-wide health care reform efforts. Panel discussions with presenters from New Hampshire gave beneficial insight on lessons learned from having implemented and used telehealth.



From left to right: BHN Board Treasurer, Chuck Myers, BHN Executive Director, Traci Sawyers, Dr. Sue Sicily of the Arizona Telemedicine Project and BHN Member and Executive Director of HowardCenter, Todd Centybear.

The afternoon provided unique opportunities for all attendees. Concurrent workshops included: “Treating Veterans via a Telehealth Pilot Program in Vermont; How to Do a Clinical Session via Telehealth; Telehealth - Instruments for Collaboration; and Tools, Resources & Success Stories Related to Telehealth Implementation.

BHN’s third annual conference was extremely successful in highlighting and learning from telehealth initiatives in Arizona and New Hampshire and determining how to implement telehealth in Vermont. Attendees walked away with concrete “know-hows” - the dos and don’ts of implementing a telehealth network and using the technology to truly benefit one of our most vulnerable populations. “Many other states are already using this technology in numerous ways and

the outcome data is overwhelmingly positive, both from practitioners and clients. Telemedicine transforms health care by delivering it more efficiently and often better, faster and for less, while significantly increasing access”, said Traci Sawyers, BHN Director.

BHN is extremely grateful to its conference sponsors, including: The White River Junction VA Medical Center, Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences Service; the Vermont Department of Health / Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs; the Vermont Department of Mental Health; and the Health Resources and Services Administration. A huge thank you is extended for all of their continued support of BHN and its member agencies.

The Behavioral Health Network of Vermont’s Telehealth Network (BHNTN) is Here!

The initial phase of the BHNTN is underway. After much research and negotiation, BHN has selected a vendor for the initial equipment for the BHNTN. BHN has a signed Purchase and Sale Agreement with York Telecom who will provide each member agency with a Polycom 42-inch screen unit and cart. The unit will enable each agency to have four-way multi-point connectivity to be used for telecommunication, clinical sharing, education and more. The equipment will be installed in July 2010 and each member will receive individual assistance from York Telecom for installation and training.

BHN staff is diligently working to secure funding for the BHNTN Bridge which will enable the telehealth equipment to be used for distance learning applications and coordination with key partners outside the BHN network. This type of education and collaboration will fundamentally improve the quality of care being provided and will have a positive impact on some of the recruitment and retention issues that exist in rural Vermont.

A Bridge will allow for continued medical education and coordinated trainings across the system, increasing employee skills and qualifications and saving money to be used to improve direct services. Employees will be supported in their careers and the quality of care being provided will

be more uniform and continuously improving.



A Bridge will also allow for multipoint communication between BHN member agencies and key partners such as primary care providers, hospitals and schools, promoting increased collaboration and integration and thus enabling broader telehealth applications in the future.

Multipoint technology and bridging services are being used to combat geographic, financial and other barriers in many states and BHN is using national models to develop its own unique application of telehealth within rural Vermont.

Business planning around telehealth and training will take place as soon as the funding for the Bridge is secured. The range of mental health services provided to rural consumers over a telehealth network is virtually limitless and includes all of the same services that can be provided in person.

2010 BHN Annual Meeting

BHN held its annual meeting on Friday June 4th in Quechee Vermont. The strategic plan was reviewed and approved.

Following are BHN’s FY11 priorities:

- Continue network development;
- Implement BHN telehealth capacity;

- Finish Blueprint model and launch pilots;
- Plan a larger BHN Training and Workforce Development Initiative to support member agencies;
- Grant writing and planning for FY12 and FY13 budgets;
- Create BHN subgroups in the following areas: veterans and their families, schools and education, FQHCs;
- Connect with larger information exchange activities (eg. VITL);
- Hold successful integration training conference;
- Identify ways to increase psychiatry within member agencies;
- Continue to identify pool of consultants who can work on specific initiatives;
- Pursue state contracts as opportunities arise;
- Continue to market BHN internally and with key partners.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

It has been another great year for BHN and it is very exciting to see how far the network has come. This year, \$55,000 in membership dues leveraged an additional \$190,000 of state and federal grants. BHN created a strong strategic plan that also outlines BHN's overall business plan. BHN's first and second year evaluation report as well as its formal HRSA performance review were extremely positive. BHN launched its telehealth initiative by purchasing 12 Polycom Telehealth Units for each member agency and the BHN administrative office to be used for telecommunications, training and clinical purposes.

BHN moved its office space to 2 Prospect Street in Montpelier (we are in with the School Board's Association, Superintendent's Association and Principal's Association) and the BHN program staff position was upgraded and Simone is an excellent addition to BHN. I have also very much enjoyed working with Charlie Smith, who is serving as a consultant to BHN on its Blueprint project, as well as Mike Kasson of ITech Solutions related to our telehealth initiative.

BHN has just begun its third year of its HRSA Network Development Grant and the support and connections this funding has brought to BHN is significant. BHN plans to apply for a HRSA Outreach grant focused on direct service next summer.

I look forward to continued progress on BHN's current initiatives and more, and thank all of the BHN members and other partners for the very meaningful support.

The Vermont Blueprint for Health

BHN has been diligently working with the State to develop Patient Centered Behavioral Health Care Home Standards and a business model for inclusion of CMHCs in the Blueprint for Health initiative. Much more to come this summer and fall!

BHN Has Moved

BHN moved offices in April. Our new address is: Two Prospect Street, Suite 5, Montpelier, Vermont. Please make note of the address change and come visit!

New BHN Staff

In October 2009, BHN hired Simone Rueschemeyer as Program Manager. Simone has an MA in Evaluative Clinical Sciences from Dartmouth Medical School and has worked in the health care field for the past 20 years. Prior to moving back to Vermont in 1997, Simone worked on health care reform in the Clinton White House offices of Policy Development and Communication. She then continued on to work for an international consulting firm where she focused on strategic business development. Upon returning to Vermont, Simone became the State Affairs Manager for Bi-State Primary Care Association. In 1999, she founded her own consulting firm focusing on health care and housing.

Behavioral Health Network of Vermont, Inc. (BHN/VT) is a membership organization of the following community mental health agencies and providers throughout the state of Vermont:

**Clara Martin Center
Counseling Service of Addison County
Health Care & Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern VT
HowardCenter
Lamoille Community Connections
Northeast Kingdom Human Services, Inc
Northeastern Family Institute
Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Inc
Rutland Mental Health Services
United Counseling Service of Bennington County
Washington County Mental Health Services**



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SAVE THE DATE

**BHN's 4th Annual Conference
Friday, February 4th 2011
The Sheraton Conference Center
Burlington, Vermont**

**The Behavioral Health Care Home and
Bi-Directional Integration: Leadership and
The Changing Landscape**