
Behavioral Health Network of Vermont Newsletter

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BHN's HRSA Network Development Grant Update

Its been a busy summer and fall with planning and implementation related to BHN's HRSA Rural Health Network Development grant. This grant - which provides BHN with \$540,000 over three years - is supporting the continued development of BHN through a strategic planning process and the creation of a formal business plan. Work also includes identifying new business opportunities and potential cost savings through shared functions, and the planning and implementation of a teleclinical network that will link BHN members, provide access to specialists, and much more.

Three consultants have been hired to help BHN in this work: Mike Kasson of ITech Solutions in New Hampshire is BHN's Telehealth Consultant; Paul (Buz) Davis of Davis and Associates in Arizona is BHN's Organizational Development/Business Planning Consultant; and Joy Livingston of Flint Springs Associates in Vermont is BHN's Program Evaluation Consultant. Mike and Buz have extensive experience working with HRSA and networks across the county, and Joy has spent many years doing program evaluation in Vermont and beyond. Work in all three areas is well underway. Mike has completed initial site visits to each BHN



From left to right: BHN Project Coordinator Maureen Schake, BHN Organizational Development/Business Consultant Buz Davis, and BHN Director Traci Sawyers at the BHN Retreat in November.

member agency and is drafting an initial plan and budget for the BHN teleclinical network; Buz lead an all day strategic planning retreat in November and is drafting a strategic planning document; and Joy is preparing the evaluation design.

In August, Traci Sawyers, BHN Director, and Linda Chambers, BHN Board President, attended the HRSA Grantee Annual Meeting in Washington DC and met other first, second and third year grantees as well directors of established networks from all over the country. Although these established organizations are diverse, they all have strong business plans and pursue a variety of business opportunities on behalf of their network members, and a large number of them are planning or have implemented tele-health initiatives.

In October, Lynne Kernaghan, BHN's HRSA Technical Assistance consultant from Georgia State Policy Center, conducted her initial site visit. She is helping us in a variety of ways, especially related to board development, policies and procedures, community engagement and more. "BHN is well on its way to meeting its grant objectives and becoming a highly effective and valuable network," Kernaghan says.

The HRSA Rural Health Network Development grant program is designed to support organizations that wish to create formal health networks. The ultimate goal of the program is to build continually self-perpetuating sustainable networks with business (network partner return) and social (community return) competencies that increase access and quality of rural health care and ultimately, the health status of rural residents.

Training Conference to Focus on Veteran and Veteran Families Mental Health Needs

BHN's annual training conference will be held on January 30, 2009 at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier and will focus on the behavioral health needs of veterans and veteran families. This event is co-sponsored by the White River Junction VA Medical Center, Mental and Behavioral Sciences Service; the VT Department of Health/ADAP; the Vermont Department of Mental Health; and, the Military, Family and Community Network. There has already been tremendous interest in this event, and it's particularly significant that these four groups can come together in this way and it sets the stage for further work and collaboration related to veterans and more.

Recent reports document substantial mental health distress and adjustment difficulties among military personnel returning from combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Problems with depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and alcohol misuse are common, particularly among National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers.

“Unless these wounds are appropriately treated, they can have far-reaching conse-

quences, including risks of other psychological problems, higher rates of suicide and physical health ills. They also can result in such long-term societal and personal troubles as homelessness, domestic violence and other major strains on families,” says Traci Sawyers, BHN Director.

It is also particularly timely since Vermont is bracing for the deployment of 1800-2000 soldiers in late 2009 or early 2010. Vermont has never faced such a large deployment.

The target audience for the BHN conference is primarily clinicians working with veterans and veteran family members. Goals for the day include helping participants: 1) develop an increased awareness and appreciation of the impact of deployment on a soldier and his/her family; 2) broaden the lens through which veterans and their families are viewed; 3) gain knowledge of supports and services available to veterans and their families; and 4) reflect on their practice and future training needs. To request a brochure or for more information, call the BHN office at 262-6124.

BHN Moves to New Office, Hires Staff

BHN has opened a physical office at 155 Elm Street in Montpelier, and our new contact information appears on the back of this newsletter. If you are in the area, please stop by and say hello.

BHN also hired Maureen Schake as its Project Coordinator in September. Maureen brings over twenty five years of experience in business administration, encompassing conference management and public and private sector work. Prior to moving to Vermont, Maureen worked in high-level administrative positions for over eight years at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She has also done

conference planning at Vermont College/Union Institute in Vermont.

Maureen will manage the office, and provide both administrative and project support to BHN. She was also instrumental in setting up the new BHN office. Maureen brings a tremendous amount of energy and dedication to the job, and is a strong addition to the BHN staff.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

So much has happened at BHN over the last six months. The organization has gone from a part-time Director working from her home office to a rapidly developing network with an formal office and staff. Our upcoming conference has generated much excitement and there has also been great interest from a variety of other partners related to BHN's network development activities and the potential for collaboration, integration and much more. With the combination of Maureen Schake, our four excellent consultants and the incredibly talented BHN board, there is much we can accomplish over these three years and beyond.

The HRSA Rural Health Network Development grant program brings precisely the resources and expertise BHN needs to continue its organizational development, and is particularly focused on sustainability beyond the term of the grant. The program has been in place for 15 years, and 85% of the networks funded are still in business. BHN will also potentially have the opportunity to apply for another three year HRSA Outreach Grant focused on implementation when this grant ends.

As we brace for these tough economic times and a changing health care environment, let us be encouraged by the opportunities for collaboration that do exist, especially in Vermont. As Alexander Graham Bell said, "Great discoveries and improvements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds."

SAVE THE DATE

The Behavioral Health Network of Vermont;

White River Junction VA Medical Center,
Mental and Behavioral Sciences Service;

Vermont Department of Health/ADAP;

Vermont Department of Mental Health; and

The Military, Family and
Community Network

Present

Serving Returning Veterans and Their Families

January 30, 2009

9 to 4

Capitol Plaza Hotel
Montpelier, Vermont

For more information call 802-262-6124

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 County Mental Health Services

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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