

SASHNEWS

Support and Services at Home

June
2018

SASH is a caring partnership among Vermont [Nonprofit Housing Providers](#) | [Area Agencies on Aging](#) | [Home Health Providers](#) | [Mental Health Providers](#) | [Vermont Hospitals](#) & Primary Care Providers



Studies show that avoiding isolation and maintaining meaningful connections with others are important to mental health, particularly among older adults. Outings and events like the summer picnic pictured here are some of the ways SASH helps people connect and stay socially engaged.

Supporting the Mental Health of Older Vermonters

Preliminary results are in from the mental-health pilot launched in late November at two SASH affordable-housing communities in Burlington.

The pilot, funded by [OneCare Vermont](#), added a mental-health clinician from the [Howard Center](#) to SASH staff at both locations. Goals included providing faster access to care for older adults with mental-health and substance-use challenges, reducing avoidable emergency room visits and improving the patient experience.



As of April 30, six months into the pilot, 37 residents had been referred to the clinician, Alison Miley, including nine self-referrals. Most of them -- 70%, or 26 individuals -- were seen the same day or the next day, and everyone was seen within eight days.

All told, during this period the clinician met with 74 individuals and hosted 16 group sessions covering such topics as dealing with grief and loss, suicide prevention, anxiety and interpersonal relations. She had 618 unique encounters with residents, including 225 emotional-wellness visits and 90 consulting conversations with SASH staff or outside providers concerning 36 individuals. Surveyed about their experiences, participants were overwhelmingly positive, with 86% reporting that they learned new coping skills and 90% confirming that "I now know more about where I can go for help."

Related: [Positive Thinking May Improve Health & Extend Life](#) (*New York Times*)

Stemming the Tide of Vermont Suicide

SASH was honored to have Alison Miley, our embedded SASH mental-health clinician (see above) present on a panel about innovative approaches to mental health in the community at the [2018 Vermont Suicide Prevention Symposium](#).



Suicide statistics in Vermont are concerning to say the least. Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death in Vermont. **Our suicide rate is 35% higher than the national average** -- and higher as well in nearly every age group, **especially among men age 70 to 74.**

SASH has worked closely with the Brattleboro-based [Center for Health & Learning](#) to provide training on the evidence-based [UMatter](#) program, a peer-education, suicide-prevention program originally designed for sharing in schools, to adapt it into a program appropriate for SASH participants. SASH has trained 21 staff in the [UMatter](#) program and offered it to 114 participants over the past eight months. We will train another five staff this year and continue to offer the program to SASH participants.

SASH also screens participants regularly for suicide risk. Recognizing the especially high rate of suicide among older Vermont males, we will be working to strengthen the engagement of this population as active SASH participants.

Learn More:

- [Presentation materials from the 2018 Vermont Suicide Prevention Symposium](#)
- [As Suicide Rate Climbs, How to Help Those in Crisis](#) (Vermont Edition, VPR, 6/12/18)
- [Vermont Suicide Rates Far Outpace Nation's](#) (VTDigger, 6/10/18)
- [Suicide Prevention Across the Lifespan](#) (Howard Center)
- [Suicide Rising Across the U.S.](#) (CDC Vital Signs, June 2018)
- [Suicide Fact Sheet](#) (CDC Vital Signs, June 2018)
- [Trends in State Suicide Rates](#) (CDC Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report, 6/8/18)
- [CAMS: Collaborative Assessment & Management of Suicidality](#)
- [Interpersonal Theory of Suicide](#)

Advancing Public Policy for Older Vermonters

Representatives of SASH and several key SASH partners -- including the [Vermont Association of Area Agencies on Aging](#) and the [VNAs of Vermont](#) -- have been appointed by statute to an 18-member working group that will help develop an "Older Vermonters Act" aligned with the federal [Older Americans Act](#), the [Vermont State Plan on Aging](#) and the [Choices for Care](#) program. Established this year by Act 172, the group will meet every other month starting in September to develop a report for the Legislature by Dec. 1, 2019, that addresses "the value of older Vermonters to the fabric of the State's communities, as well as the service and support needs that older Vermonters may have."



OneCare Vermont Board Seeks Medicaid Member

[OneCare Vermont](#) is seeking people who are enrolled in Medicaid to serve on its Board of Managers and provide the "consumer's perspective" on how to improve health care for Vermonters. Meetings take place on the third Tuesday of

every month from 4:30 to 7 p.m. and are held on a rotating basis in Colchester (at OneCare Vermont headquarters), Berlin (at Central Vermont Medical Center) or Lebanon, N.H. (at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center). If you know someone who would be a good candidate and is interested in this volunteer (unpaid) opportunity, they should email spenser.weppler@onecarevt.org with a brief description of themselves.



Professional Development Opportunities

Please refer to the [statewide SASH Calendar](#) for details about these and other offerings.

- June 25: **We Can Do This Together: Creating Dementia-Friendly Communities** (Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging), webinar
- June 26: **Finding the Balance: Enhancing Self-Efficacy in Persons Living with Dementia** (American Society on Aging), webinar
- June 27: **Dealing with Emotions** (Bruyere Centre for Learning, Research & Innovation in Long-Term Care (CLRI), webinar
- July 24 & 25: **COPD Educational Course** (Vermont Lung Association), Williston
- August 17: **Healthy Living Workshop Refresher** (UVM Health), Randolph

SASH Online Resources

Referral Forms & Contact List: Visit sashvt.org/connect.
Training information, Staff Tools & Resources: Visit the [Forum](#).
SASH Job Opportunities: See [positions available statewide](#).



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