

SASH staff share successes, challenges and proven practices at annual all-staff training day



SASH staff throughout Vermont turned out in force May 9 for the 4th Annual All-Staff Training Day, with more than 100 staff members convening in Lebanon, N.H., for the day-long team-building and training intensive. We are grateful to [Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center](#) for once again helping to make this event possible.

Starting with a welcome from SASH Director Molly Dugan, attendees learned about a soon-to-be released federal study documenting that SASH participants move into long-term care facilities less often and for shorter lengths of time than their non-SASH peers. The resulting savings in Medicaid expenditures for nursing care are significant — particularly among rural SASH participants. (We will share this study as soon as it is made public, which we expect to happen in June.)

Next came “SASH & All It Stands For,” a creative art project designed by training coordinator Amy Rogers, who challenged groups at each table to come up with additional meanings for each of the letters in SASH. (One group’s project is displayed at right.)

Later in the day SASH presented its first “Partners in Excellence Awards” to Beth Tanzman of the Vermont Blueprint for Health within the Agency of Human Services, Jill Lord of Mt. Ascutney Hospital & Health Center, and Denise Dupuis of the Windham-Windsor Housing Trust, coordinator of the SASH program in Windsor.



The day closed out with separate breakout sessions for SASH wellness nurses, who focused on “Meeting the Psychosocial Needs of Persons with Dementia” (see this list of [“Ten Absolutes for Caregivers”](#)); and for SASH coordinators, who delved into “Social Isolation & Depression.”

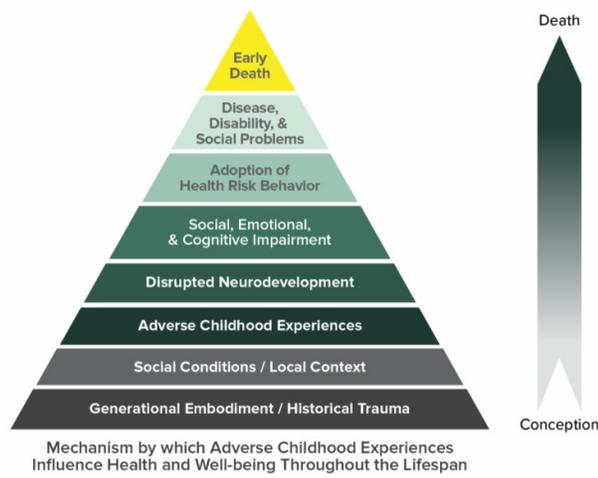


Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) & their impact on later life

Kimberly Pierce, PA-C, of the Plainfield Health Center and an expert in a [long-term study](#) by Kaiser Permanente and

the CDC on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), gave an enlightening presentation on how traumatic events experienced as a child — whether due to abuse, neglect, poverty or other challenges — lead to changes in our brains that in turn affect our physical and mental health as we age.

“The ACEs study shows that when bad things happen to you as a kid, it leaves a lasting impression — stress is downloaded into our DNA,” she said, adding that inflammation — the basis of all chronic conditions — is directly linked to how often children spend in fight/flight mode.



Pierce has had multiple trainings over the past 10 years with Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the world’s foremost experts on trauma. Author of *The Body Keeps the Score*, van der Kolk explains how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain and how innovative treatments — from neurofeedback and meditation to yoga, the arts and physical activity — can help restore the brain’s natural neuroplasticity.

Keynote speaker urges self-care for caregivers

The keynote address by Jeanine Fitzgerald, founder of the [Fitzgerald Institute for Lifelong Learning](#) and a certified human behavior consultant, started with the distressing statement that 89% of children are in some sort of distress, reinforcing Pierce’s earlier presentation.

Fitzgerald focused on the “three S’s of stress” — symptoms, sources and solutions — and the importance of self-care among caregivers in order to avoid burnout (which she defined as emotional exhaustion, disillusionment and withdrawal) and the “secondary traumatic stress” of compassion fatigue.



(image: BlessingManifesting.com)

Panel discussion on SASH and health care in Vermont

Following lunch came a meaty session on the current state and future direction of health care in Vermont and the unique contributions of SASH. Panelists Beth Tanzman, executive director of the Vermont Blueprint for Health within the Agency of Human Services; Sandra Knowlton-Soho, ACO clinical consultant for OneCare Vermont; and Jill Lord, director of community health at Mt. Ascutney Hospital & Health Center, shared their perspectives on a variety of issues, including:

- the challenges facing small, rural hospitals in our state;
- how might we collectively improve how we combat substance misuse and address mental health issues; and
- the components of SASH that have most positively impacted the delivery of health care in Vermont.

Partners represented on SASH teams throughout Vermont include members and affiliates of these organizations:



A comprehensive list of all SASH partners can be found in the [SASH Partnership](#).



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