



Vermont Department of Mental Health **MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH**

Week Three 2022

Prevention and Progress

Expanding Suicide Prevention Efforts

Recent efforts to address the ongoing issue of deaths by suicide are expanding across the state. The Department of Mental Health (DMH) is partnering with the Department of Health (VDH), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and various partners across the state to create and implement suicide prevention initiatives.

Happening Now



Various grant funded initiatives are working to confront the issue of suicide in Vermont from multiple angles. A grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is building supportive infrastructure across the state, assessing current practices, bolstering programs, and [creating new data products](#). While DMH has assisted with this project, VDH has led the way in this public health approach to prevention.

Vermont has also joined the [Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families](#). This collaboration

between multiple departments in the state and the VA is working to create supports tailored to this community.



Suicide Prevention Center

In addition to the above programs, the [Vermont Suicide Prevention Center](#) is offering newly developed [Suicide and Awareness Support Trainings](#) which they write, "are available to help Vermont organizations improve their ability to identify and support people who may be experiencing suicidal thoughts."

Prevention Through Building Community

Alongside broader public health and prevention initiatives are those taking a different approach. [The Men's Shed Program](#) is coming to Vermont thanks to funding from the Vermont Community Foundation's VT COVID19 Response Fund, and the coordination work of [Support and Services at Home](#) (SASH).



Program lead, April Mentzer, writes, "Sheds are a place for men to gather for socialization and to work together on completing projects. The first Shed was built in Tongala, Victoria, Australia in 1998 and they have since spread internationally and throughout the United States. Sheds are a community center for men to share a cup of coffee, support each other through life's ups and downs, and to share their skills and talents with each other." If you or someone you know is interested in starting or joining a Shed, you can contact April Mentzer [here](#).



Where We Go from Here

Preventing suicide in Vermont is an ongoing task. Workgroups made up of organizations, advocates, and individuals with lived experience continue to meet regularly to ensure that progress continues and that the work done is impactful for all Vermonters.

Each September we recognize Suicide Awareness Month. This year's Vermont Suicide Prevention Symposium takes place on September 29, 2022. The theme is: From Hope to Prevention to Connection. This annual event is being facilitated by the [Center for Health and Learning](#) (CHL).



CHL writes that, "The event will look upstream preventatively and ensure our systems are compassionate and effective and offer hope to those struggling with suicidality," The VT Suicide Prevention Center is currently accepting proposals for workshop presentations for the Symposium. To submit a proposal, [please fill out the online application](#). The deadline to submit is **June 10, 2022**.

If you or someone you know is struggling, [help is available 24/7](#) at the resources listed below. More information and resources are listed at the [Department of Mental Health](#).

You Are Not Alone

Help is Available, 24/7

COVIDSupportVT.org, call 2-1-1, or visit Facebook, Instagram or Twitter for free, anonymous help

If you need help, text VT to 741741

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255

Vermont Peer Support Line – Call or text 833-888-2557

Compassion and Self-Care

How we perceive our experiences, whether they are challenging or positive, informs how we respond to them. These stories we tell ourselves impact our wellbeing. Using the lens of compassion can improve how we respond to life. "Another way to say this is that self-compassion means recognizing and accepting our own humanness—which means, by definition, that we are not perfect." said Dr. Kristin Neff, a leader in the field of self-compassion research, when speaking to [Psychology Today](#).

Ways of practicing self-care can include:



Journaling

Exercise



Meditation



Talking to a friend, relative, or other members of your community



Setting aside time to be creative



There are also [many other ways to engage in the practice of self-care](#).

A selection of coloring pages, meant for all ages, were kindly made available for all to use by Alister Kai, owner of [The Crafty Queer](#). Examples like the ones below, along with more designs, are also [available for anyone to download](#) and print at home.



www.thecraftyqueer.com

Four-Legged Friends

There are all sorts of alternative ways to get the help we need. United Counseling Services (UCS) based out of Bennington, utilizes horses when working with the community. As UCS explains, the "Equine Assisted Therapy program is based on the precept that experiencing, building, and maintaining healthy relationships is the foundation of mental illness and trauma healing and recovery."

"Horses are highly sensitive to the energy and actions of their herd mates and in their immediate environment. Their non-verbal responses provide a visible canvas upon which human clients can witness their own internal energy, mood, and behavioral characteristics."

Learn more about how to participate in [UCS' Equine Assisted Therapy](#) and read about how it has [helped to encourage healing](#).

