



Council Connections brings the latest news on disability rights, resources that promote inclusion, and opportunities for advocacy to individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members living in the heart of Vermont Communities.



This is the first generation where children are cared for at home instead of being placed in an institution.

Photo credit to
SevenDaysVT.

FEWER NURSES IN VERMONT PUTS PRESSURE ON PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Over the last two decades there have been fewer and fewer people to fill nursing positions in hospitals, clinics, and homes, and it's predicted that it's only going to get worse.

Parents seem to lead double-lives of family-member and professional nurse as they're required to exhaustively balance their careers, relationships, children's well-being, and sleep, because they are not receiving the full amount of professional support their children were promised. It's as if being a superhero all hours of the day is their only option.

"The consequence of not having someone alert, ready to take care of the kids, is really dire," said attorney Barbara Prine of [Vermont Legal Aid](#).

"Part of the problem is we have this expectation that parents can go above and beyond. These parents are going above and beyond night after night, week after week, month after month, year after year, and that is a huge toll on them and their families." - Barbara Prine

How does it work? The [Vermont Department of Health](#) looks at individual needs and the severity of those needs, and decides how many hours of professional and technical nurse support a family qualifies to receive. It is determined that Medicaid pays for those hours. But just because the Department says a certain level of care is needed, does not guarantee that all of those hours will be filled.

Home Health Support Agencies are always hiring, but the wages are often below what hospitals pay. Even when wages are competitive, some nurses simply don't want to work in homes: The hours are long and visiting nurses typically work alone. All this makes it



Because of the nursing shortage, many families are forced to fill vacant shifts and spend more time in hospitals.

difficult for families to find high-quality professional staff to look after their children and they are often left to privately hire and train providers.

For more information, [read article by SevenDaysVT.](#)



Sarah Launderville, President of the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights, talks with former President, Ed Paquin.

DISABILITY ADVOCATES REMAIN READY FOR ACTION AFTER HEALTHCARE REPEAL FAILED

The Affordable Care Act may be safe for the rest of the year, but other services are still at risk of being redrafted, reduced, or eliminated.

Federal healthcare initiatives, Medicaid and Medicare, may be the next to be targeted as Senators are already drafting ways to lift requirements and give more power to individual states. National standards are important because they guide public and private insurance companies, and prevent states from being too conservative (like capping Medicaid) or spending federal dollars to support only those they categorize as "high risk". **Any changes, even minor ones, could result with millions of Americans losing coverage in low-income communities, especially small rural states like Vermont.**

Sarah Launderville, Executive Director of the [Vermont Center for Independent Living](#) and President of the [Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights](#), was present as the Senate cast their final votes to keep the Affordable Care Act. She's concerned that changes to Medicaid could hurt Vermonters with disabilities. Launderville said, "Medicaid is the most important part of this for us, because it's the only insurance that pays for long-term supports and services."

For more information, [read or listen to the article by VPR](#) and [read or watch the article by WCAX.](#)



Half of Vermont's population is over the age of 42.

UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR MEALS ON WHEELS

Vermont's aging population has placed a higher demand on programs that support seniors to live at home.

[Meals on Wheels](#) helps older Vermonters who are unable to cook or regularly attend community meals. Overseen by the Vermont Council on Aging, the program serves about 4,700 Vermonters daily by bringing them a hot meal and checking-in on their well-being. Another 10,000 get daily meals in group settings, such as senior centers

Officials are trying to avoid waiting lists, but this has forced them to scale back the program, cutting breakfast and reducing the number of days per week that meals arrive.

Vermont is second only to Maine in having the highest median age statewide. There also appears to be a shift in the population served. Today, Meals on Wheels works with many Seniors who are in their sixties but struggle with chronic medical conditions. The federal government covers only a third of the program's cost.

For more information, [read the article by the Times Argus.](#)



CALL TO ALL - VERMONT ARTISTS WITH DISABILITIES WANTED FOR ART GALLERY

Feature your art statewide, expand your audience, and get the professional recognition you deserve.

The [Vermont State Organization on Arts and Disability \(VSA Vermont\)](#), the [Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#), and the [Flynn Center](#), have joined together to host a unique opportunity for professionals with disabilities who are serious about art as a career. **Submissions deadline is September 29, 2017.**

"Acceptable media includes, but is not limited to, painting and drawing in oil, acrylic, watercolor, pencil and charcoal, digital art, photographs, collage, fiber art or computer-generated prints."

The show, titled "Flourish", will run from April 7 to June 30, 2018. Participating artist's will receive technical support, help with sales, and assistance with hanging and displaying their work.

For more information on artist prerequisites, size and medium requirements, gallery duration, and deadline to apply, [visit the VSA Vermont website for Flourish.](#)

WHAT'S UP, UNDER THE BIG DOME?

The legislature is not in session, but advocacy happens year round.

- Governor Phil Scott revealed his plan for addressing a \$28 million budget shortfall last week. At this time, key human services programs for people with disabilities have not been targeted for a budget rescission.
- The Division of Developmental Disability Services is taking public comment on its draft System of Care Plan until September 15, 2017. This document The Plan sets priorities for who will receive Home and community based services over the next three years. Testimony at last week's State Program Standing Committee touched on requiring greater transparency for the use of one time funds and keeping those funds within DD Services, clarifying disclosure of appeal rights when services are denied or reduced, and providing a more comprehensive look at the unmet needs of people with I/DD in Vermont. If you would like to provide comment, VTDDC has tools and talking points available this week. Please contact Susan Aranoff at Susan.Aranoff@Vermont.gov



SAVE THE DATE for the next Quarterly Meeting

Council members work together to increase public awareness and to encourage systems change. They are expected to attend four day-long meetings each year and to be active participants on a committee or work group.



When: **Thursday, September 28, 2017**

Where: **Hannaford Career Center**, Middlebury, Vermont

The mission of VTDDC is to help build connections and supports that bring people with developmental disabilities, and their families, in the heart of Vermont Communities.