

Testimony at the Advocates Hearing
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Vermont Care Partners requests that we maintain our commitment to Vermonters by appropriating a 3% rate increase for developmental and mental health services in the FY21 budget

Designated and Specialized Service Agencies (DA/SSAs) are doing the work of the State to meet mental health developmental disability and substance use disorder needs of Vermonters who have complex needs, low incomes and who are at risk for higher cost interventions.

The model of community based non-profit agencies reduces costs and improves responsiveness to community needs, but without adequate increases in Medicaid rates equivalent to the compensation increases received by state, school, health care workers, we cannot recruit and retain staff and we can't fulfill our mission. Here are the facts:

- Turnover rate is at 28%
- 1/5 of clinical position vacant
- Over 400 staff positions vacant
- Shared living providers are hard to recruit

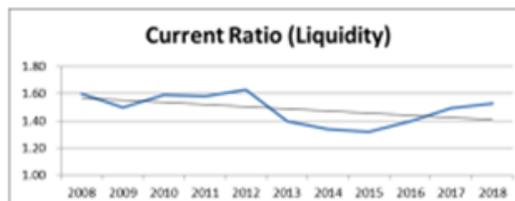
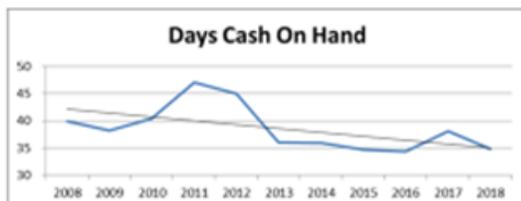
We've heard this before. What's different now?

How we make it work:

In order to accommodate expense increases, agencies make substantial efforts to minimize all other costs that include decisions to close or reduce programs, defer capital and maintenance needs, and increase staff caseloads and productivity expectations.

Why it won't work long term:

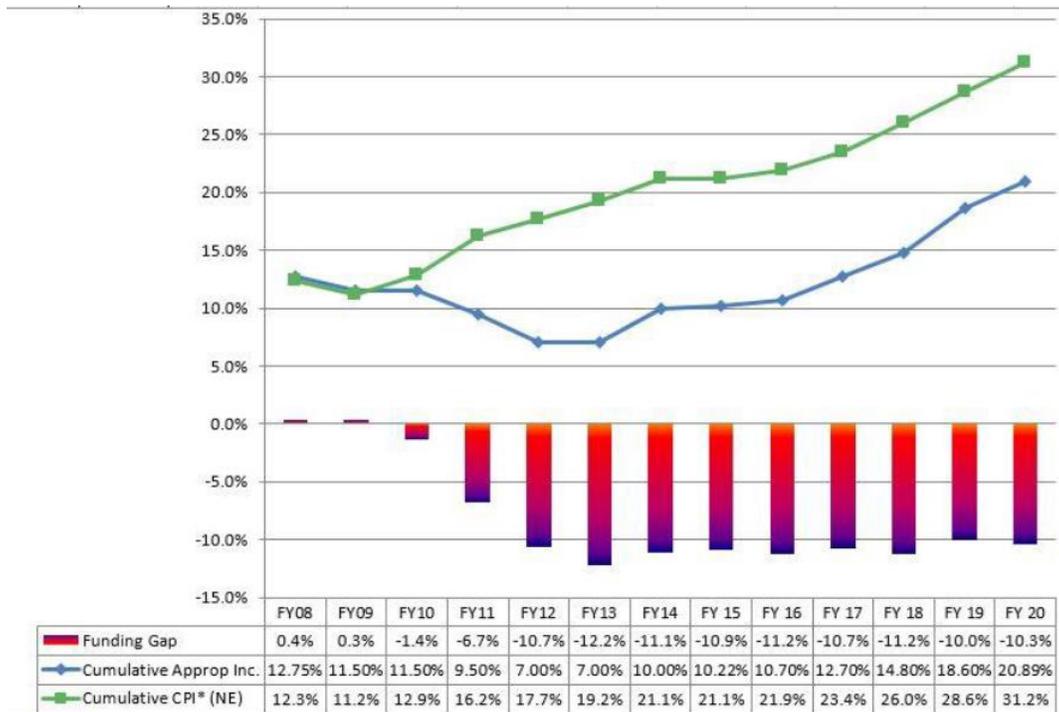
The financial health of community based service organizations is increasingly compromised. Cash on hand continues to drop as does agencies' ability to cover liabilities. Workforce challenges continue. Community services prevent costs elsewhere.



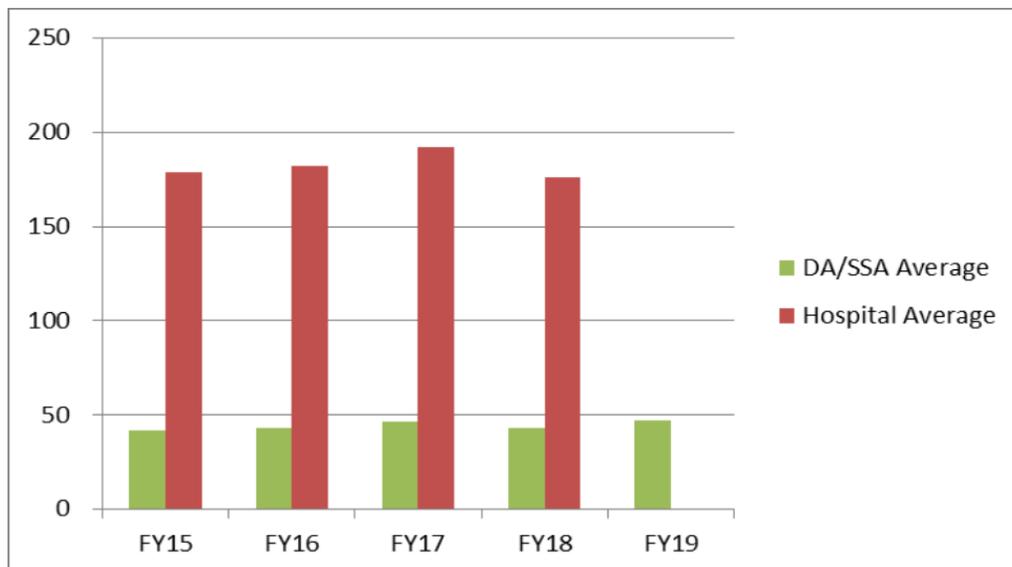
Why it's worth the investment:

Adequate funding for our services will improve outcomes and reduce costs downstream. For example, the challenge of patients with psychiatric conditions stuck in Emergency Departments cannot be solved without an investment in the community-based service to ensure adequate access to upstream services. We need enough licensed clinicians to intervene before people spin into crisis, but with salaries \$20,000 below that of State and Health care employees, it's an uphill climb.

THE GAP BETWEEN THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX and DA/SSA RATES IS UNSUSTAINABLE



DAYS OF CASH ON HAND DA/SSA AND HOSPITALS



Before we invest in new initiatives lets make sure we are meeting our core commitments