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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **FEDERAL FUNDS COME TO THE LAMOILLE VALLEY TO HELP YOUNG ADULTS**

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has awarded the state of Vermont \$9 million dollars over 6 years for a 'Youth in Transition' initiative to strengthen the system of care and increase services for young adults ages 16 up to 22. The Lamoille Valley will receive \$57,074 per year for the next 5 years as the regional share of this initiative.

The target for these funds are young adults who face significant obstacles that prevent them from reaching a healthy and successful adulthood. Some of the pressing issues they cope with are mental health problems, substance abuse, lack of access to health care, lack of education, lack of safe and stable housing and a lack of employment. SAMHSA recognizes that spending prevention funds with young adults will reduce taxpayer costs over the long term. For example, young adults with emotional issues use the ER for health care at much higher rates than the general population in Vermont, at considerable cost. Further, these young adults are at much higher risk of being involved with the criminal justice system at a sizeable cost to taxpayers.

In the Morrisville District, 65 young adults up to age 22 are currently involved with corrections, and that number increases to 151 if young adults up to age 25 are included (2/09). At Lamoille County Court Diversion, the number of juvenile net referrals increased significantly from 10 in FY 2008 to 45 in FY2009 and the Teen Alcohol Safety Program (TASP) referrals jumped by almost 30% during this period. Department of Corrections (DOC) reports that 90% of incarcerated young adults in Vermont have no high school diploma. One recent national study reports that state costs for each young adult that drops out are estimated at \$292,000; this is measured by loss of tax revenue, transfer costs and incarceration costs.

A group of community partners conducted an assessment, and created a plan to help support at-risk Lamoille young adults in the process of transitioning into adulthood. Out of this process, a partnership developed between Lamoille Community Connections (LCC), Community Health Services of the Lamoille Valley (CHSLV), the Agency for Human Services (AHS) and Lamoille County Court Diversion to employ and supervise a Criminal Justice Social Worker (CJSW). The CJSW will work with at-risk young adults ages 16 up to 22 doing intensive case coordination for a period of 3-6 months; the position will be co-located at local police departments, the court and CHSLV, at the Behavioral Health and Wellness Clinic. The primary role of the CJSW will be to connect young adults with needed assessments and services, and key areas of focus will be increasing access to healthcare, increasing high school completion, increasing access to safe and stable housing and employment opportunities, to increase the number of caring relationships in young adults' lives and to ultimately prevent further criminal justice system involvement. The model is based on a police-social worker partnership that has successfully reduced crime rates in several towns in Southern Vermont.

Other grant initiatives are to hire a grant manager to implement systems-level strategies to help young adults meet health care, education, housing and employment needs and to hire a youth outreach worker to connect with and advocate for young adults. If you are a young adult who has faced mental health or substance abuse challenges in your life and overcome them, and are interested in becoming our stipend-paid part-time youth outreach worker, please contact Annie Paumgarten at (802) 760-8460 or [annieclay@hotmail.com](mailto:annieclay@hotmail.com). In the next few months, a steering committee will be formed to oversee and direct grant activities. If you are a young adult or parent of a young adult and interested in being on the steering committee, please contact Grant Manager: Annie Paumgarten, at (802) 760-8460 or [annieclay@hotmail.com](mailto:annieclay@hotmail.com). If you have a referral, please contact CJSW: Carl Stewart at 888-8324 or [cstewart@chslv.org](mailto:cstewart@chslv.org).