



As a legislator and Vermonter participating in one of the health care committees in our state you are engaged in a process to bring about meaningful changes to our ‘system’ of healthcare so that we:

- Make effective use of our limited resources
- Have appropriate funding mechanisms in place
- Hold ourselves/practitioners accountable for strong clinical outcomes
- Coordinate services between medical and behavioral health practitioners

PrimariLink is the manager service organization of Retreat Healthcare. We are non profit, provider run and have a simple but powerful mission statement of providing our clients with ‘the right care, at the right time, in the right setting,’ PrimariLink has partnered with MVP Healthcare to develop quality improvement activities involving any willing medical, mental health and substance abuse practitioner in Vermont. Our belief is that as practitioners who live and practice in Vermont we are strategically situated to prove that high quality care and sound financial practice are not mutually exclusive. It should never be simply managing dollars; it should always be about advocating for the needs of Vermonters, our neighbors, who seek services.

As such, here are some of the projects we are working on:

- **Depression in Primary Care**

Dr. Frederick Engstrom and Dr Geoffrey Kane have presented to more than 200 of Vermont’s primary care physicians in the recognition, assessment and treatment of psychiatric issues in medical settings. Dr. Kane has presented at the annual Vermont Child Health Improvement Project (VCHIP). His presentation is available on the Southern Vermont AHEC web site. Following his in-services Dr. Engstrom has been available for psychiatric consultation to each of the physicians he has trained.

- **Collaborative Office Rounds with Pediatricians and Family Practitioners**

Responding to the shortage of child psychiatry time in our state, we will be offering to pediatricians and family practitioners in Windham County training and consultative services with several child psychiatrists and an experienced family therapist. This approach, known as Collaborative Office Rounds is one response to maximize resources and bring together the medical, mental health and substance abuse practitioners who treat our children.

- **Client Directed Outpatient Care**

In the past several years, with the help of over 100 Vermont providers we've embarked on a project to both improve access to and the clinical outcomes of outpatient therapy. We've hired Scott Miller Ph.D. a nationally known researcher/teacher to help us identify the best forms of true client directed care. We've offered free training and Continuing Education Credits to providers and on January 6th we will be having another training session to review progress on the current project. We have invited representatives from Magellan, CIGNA, Medicaid and BISHCA to join in the conversations with practitioners. Please feel free to join us on the 6th.

- **Integrated case management for medical and behavioral health services**

Clients admitted to hospitals are evaluated for both medical and psychiatric issues and where appropriate MVP and PrimariLink case managers coordinate their work, identify needed resources and serve as consultants to each other ensuring clients receive comprehensive care for all their needs.

We hope this brief overview of our work demonstrates that even within the larger debate of healthcare there is still progress being made, progress based upon the mutual work of practitioners, health plans and case managers, progress not based simply on dollars but rather on a vision of quality care that holds all of us accountable to the people we serve in Vermont.

If you'd like more information about our work, please call or e-mail Peter Albert at 802-258-6111 or palbert@retreathealthcare.org.

Best regards for a happy holiday season.

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