

Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living

A Message from the Commissioner



Welcome to the *Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living's 2016 Annual Report*. We have a great deal to celebrate and to be proud of in our work together on behalf of and with Vermonters. Across all five of our divisions, we continue to prioritize choice, independence and meaningful inclusion in community as the cornerstones for the work we do. As we continue to mature in that philosophy, we recognize that honoring choice means that we must continue to adapt and respond to changing needs and be willing to take some risks, support new innovations and maintain a focus on outcomes.

We are honored this year that Vermont's Developmental Disabilities system was ranked 2nd in the nation by United Cerebral Palsy for our strengths in promoting independence and productivity, keeping families together and reaching those in need, and tracking health, safety and quality of life. Innovation is happening across the field- both in our community partners who continue to pilot new strategies to live independently- and within our own work. In the past year, we began initiatives to promote Supported Decision Making, explore the use of Personal Outcomes Measures and offered certification in Person Centered Thinking within the field- all areas in which we continue to strive to improve outcomes for individuals and their families.

We see the changing Vermont demographic as the median age of our population increases. Choices for Care continues to see significant success in ensuring that individuals can age at home, in their communities, making conscious and informed decisions about their care and supports. We are bending the curve on nursing facility stays and shifting, along with the industry, to define the appropriate role a skilled nursing facility plays in the rehabilitation of an individual or as a choice for longer term care. Within our partnerships with the aging network across the state, the Companion Aide Pilot and increasing use of the Oasis curriculum ensures that care for individuals with dementia is cutting edge. We also work to support a successful aging narrative- wellness, nutrition, engagement and a mature and skilled workforce are the jewels of our state and for all of us.

Our work in the employment of individuals with disabilities is unparalleled across the nation. We are a model for other states and our outcomes are among the highest in the

Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living

country. Tried and true methods bear fruit, but the innovations continue- progressive employment, participation in federal grant opportunities to pilot new strategies, a focus on youth and concurrent approaches to education and career readiness. These are the strengths of Vermont's vocational rehabilitation system.

As the bottom line in safety and protection, DAIL works to ensure the protection of vulnerable Vermonters and to develop and promulgate licensing standards to ensure the health and wellbeing of any individual in care. In SFY 16, we continued to partner with the Adult Protective Services (APS) Subcommittee to support stakeholder voice in system improvements, we revamped the mandatory reporter training, and we continued our work to update the home health designation rules to bring them into alignment with the reality of the work of agencies today. These examples represent just some of our best thinking and guidance for future excellence.

None of this could be accomplished without the relationships we have with our community provider system and our many partnerships across state and federal government, and with the legislature and the Executive branch. Much would fall by the wayside without our self-advocates, our stakeholders, and the families who challenge us to rise above what we think is possible. And the work would grind to a halt without the dedicated, passionate staff that power DAIL daily- they are the creativity, the energy, the commitment that has built one of the strongest system of home and community based supports in the country, honoring each individual as the point of light that they are.

Ultimately, we believe that the work of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living benefits all of Vermont because our communities are stronger and better when every member is included, when every member's gifts and strengths are utilized and appreciated and when we are able to see ourselves at every stage of our life and regardless of our abilities as part of a robust, vibrant and supportive community. That is truly the Vermont way.



Monica Caserta Hutt
DAIL Commissioner