

Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: Health Care & Rehab Services of Southeastern Vermont, Inc.

Project Title: Interactive Virtual Access (IVA)

Project Type: Sustainable Adoption

Executive Summary

NEED: Mental health/substance abuse/developmental disability agencies across Vermont all have varying access to specialty-trained psychiatrists and other expert staff members. As resources and expertise are shared, enormous costs and inefficiencies related to necessary travel and staff time are realized - costs and inefficiencies that could easily be eliminated through the use of broadband based technology. Further, staff time spent traveling to emergency departments to respond to clients in mental health crises limits productivity, as does staff time spent traveling to and from meetings and trainings across the state, and even within HCRS locations. But most importantly, the residents of Vermont most in need of mental health services are not always provided with the timely care that is crucial to effective treatment, largely due to an inadequate telecommunications infrastructure within the state mental health system.

APPROACH: In response to inefficient operations, and more critically, to factors that limit timely access to care for vulnerable Vermonters, Health Care and Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont (HCRS), United Counseling Services (UCS) and a variety of collaborators propose the implementation of Interactive Virtual Access, or IVA. IVA focuses on the use of interactive, broadband-delivered video technology to provide interconnectivity among key agencies and organizations.

This approach clearly addresses the BTOP statutory purpose of providing broadband education awareness, training, access, equipment and support to community anchor institutions, job-creating strategic facilitates, and vulnerable populations, in that the proposed project is designed to support sustainable broadband adoption among mental health agencies and other related organizations that are dedicated to caring for vulnerable populations. Staff members of partner and collaborative organizations will also utilize the equipment for training, continuing education and staff development. Further, vulnerable populations will have access to the technology on an individual basis as consults and assessments are conducted, and individual care is provided.

AREA SERVED: Through IVA, HCRS as the lead applicant and UCS, a primary project partner, will serve patients in their service areas: Windham, Windsor and Bennington counties, with a total population of

136,124 collectively. The average median household income for these counties is \$47,013, which is below the state average, and 10.3% of residents live in poverty.

In addition to serving the primary areas of Windham, Windsor and Bennington counties through IVA, the project will also serve clients and professionals across the state of Vermont through the positioning of interactive, broadband-delivered video equipment among collaborator agencies, including but not limited to the Vermont Department of Mental Health, and State Hospital, the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living and the Vermont Council of Development and Mental Health Services.

QUALIFICATIONS THAT DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT AND ACHIEVE ITS INTENDED RESULTS:

Health Care & Rehabilitation Services of Southeastern Vermont (HCRS), a non-profit Community Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities service organization, has been providing services in a solely rural area of southeastern Vermont for over four decades. The agency covers two counties, Windham and Windsor, an area of some 95 thousand lives. The organization is responsible, as designated by legislature in the State of Vermont, for providing mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities services to all Medicaid and Medicare covered individuals and families, as well as the uninsured in those two counties. HCRS serves over 5000 individuals or families annually through 500 staff members and 5 psychiatrists, with clients ranging from those under one year old to the elderly. In addition to offering clinical care, HCRS provides community supports and community outreach with a goal of integrating physical and behavioral health throughout the two-county area. The agency also provides a 24/7 crisis emergency team; the team works with local police, hospitals, and community partners to provide emergency assessment, care, and support to those in crisis.

In addition to possessing all of the organizational capabilities required to successfully carry out IVA project plans, HCRS has broad experience in implementing large-scale, innovative, grant funded projects similar to the one proposed. Further, HCRS has extensive technological capabilities, and has piloted the use of the proposed video technology, thus positioning the organization to implement plans quickly and effectively.

JOBS TO BE SAVED OR CREATED: While IVA will not create any jobs, over 1,000 employees of partner and collaborator organizations will be provided with the opportunity to take advantage of broadband-delivered video trainings and continuing education classes. Such training will allow the clinical staff to remain credentialed, and more importantly, allow all participants to increase the skills and knowledge necessary to remain competitive in the workforce. Additionally, the provision of training will allow all

organizations involved to build a more retainable workforce, as those individuals with the most updated skills/knowledge are likely to remain critical to organizations' operations.

OVERALL COST OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT: The project's non-construction budget totals \$991,763, of which \$743,822 is requested from the US Dept. of Commerce, \$20,991 of which will be provided as cash match, and \$226,950, will be provided as in-kind match.