

GMSS REPORTER

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HOLIDAY PARTY 2023



Thank you to everyone who attended the holiday party in December in Morrisville. Both pancakes and smiles were served!



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We are building great momentum

Dear GMSS Community, A new year, a new logo and website soon to be unveiled, and solid new foundations – we are building such momentum now! We recently received our Developmental Services Quality Review Report and it is, as previously reported, overall very positive. We do have some areas to work further on. We need, for example, to better ensure that medication information is fully reflected on Emergency Fact Sheets. We are also going to work on our person-centered plans to ensure that outcomes (goals), support strategies, and indicators of progress are all strong and clear, and then reviewed accordingly. I'm pleased to share the following quotes from the report. Congratulations to each of you!

“The attention to individual services at GMSS is no longer compromised by unnecessary agency initiatives and projects that were priorities under the previous administration. GMSS is now engaged in responsible financial practices, clear communication and collabora-

tion with State agencies and provider partners, and has adopted an approach that facilitates and standardizes a culture of transparent, ethical, and best-practice informed services. Direct support professionals have a greater opportunity to succeed as support teams now focus on effective, person-centered service with less distraction.”

“Over the last year, GMSS has transformed from a provider at risk of losing their designation status to a responsibly managed, accountable, and responsive service provider.”

Our holiday party, despite a snowstorm and then flooding, was in the end a great success and was enjoyed by all who could safely make their way to the agency. We watched “The Grinch” on the big screen, made



ELIZABETH WALTERS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

holiday crafts, and enjoyed a fine breakfast of freshly cooked pancakes with local (thanks, Lisa Tilton!) maple syrup. It's so wonderful that we can gather again in these ways. Thank you to everyone who attended and helped to make it such a fantastic event.

As we move forward into 2024, we will be moving further away from a primary focus on corrective action to a focus that is broader, more pro-active than reactive, and designed to ensure our sustained success. We are ambitiously building toward the future now and we have a busy and exciting year ahead of us. This month, for example, we are modernizing our IT infrastructure to enhance security and productivity. We are also beginning to build comprehensive internal review processes that will ensure the systematic review of services for people served – from eligibility to staffing, service delivery, documentation, and outcome monitoring.

Please reach out any time and thank you for being part of the GMSS community!

Happy New Year!

UPCOMING GMSS BOARD MEETING

The next GMSS board meeting will be held Thursday, Jan. 18th, 2024 from 6:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. via Zoom. All members of the GMSS community are welcome to attend board meetings. The board will designate a public comment period at each meeting during which community members may ask questions or offer comments.



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DAIL commissioner stepping down

Waterbury, Vt. - Agency of Human Services Secretary Jenney Samuelson recently announced that Monica White, Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL), has decided to step down from her role at DAIL. Her last day will be Friday, January 12, 2024.

“It has been an extraordinary honor to serve as DAIL’s Commissioner. My decision to step down was made after considerable deliberation and is what is best for my family at this time,” said Commissioner White. “I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the phenomenal team at DAIL for the past nearly three years, and I am confident that our department, alongside its many valued community partners, will continue forth in our shared commitment to make Ver-

mont the best state in which to grow old or to live with a disability – with dignity, respect, and independence.”

White has served as Commissioner since March of 2021.

“Commissioner White played an integral role in the pandemic, working to address issues affecting older Vermonters, ensuring the safety of assisted living and skilled nursing facilities, and stabilizing many health care providers. Her work was an important component of Vermont’s leading pandemic response,” said Secretary Samuelson. “Through her time at DAIL, she has shown compassion and dedication to the individuals served by the Department, often sitting with clients facing challenging circumstances. I appreciate her compassion and service to Vermonters.”

DAIL Deputy Commissioner Me-

gan Tierney-Ward will serve as Acting Commissioner until a new Commissioner is appointed. Tierney-Ward has been a steady presence at DAIL for over 25 years, most recently as the Deputy Commissioner for the last four years. Her prior roles include the Director of the Adult Services Division and the Program Manager for the State’s Choices for Care program.

The Agency of Human Services and DAIL have begun a search for a new DAIL Commissioner. Interested candidates will find details and can apply at <https://careers.vermont.gov/> or by emailing a cover letter and resume to kristin.kellett@vermont.gov.

Secretary Samuelson, AHS staff, and especially DAIL staff, wish Commissioner White well in her future endeavors and appreciate Megan Tierney-Ward stepping in.

Be prepared for respiratory virus season

BURLINGTON, VT – Fall and winter are the seasons when respiratory viruses spread more easily, and that means now is the best time to protect yourself and loved ones from serious illness and hospitalization. The Health Department is urging everyone 6 months and older to get this year’s COVID-19 and flu vaccines.

People can also talk to their doctor about new RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) immunization options for babies, people who are pregnant, and adults ages 60 and older.

“Having vaccines available for three potentially dangerous illness-

es can make a real impact on all our health,” said Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD. “It’s a busy time of year, people are arranging travel and holiday get-togethers, and no one wants to be sick. So, let’s protect ourselves and prevent the spread of germs now and through the winter.”

Vaccines protect against severe illness and hospitalization. If you do get sick, being vaccinated can make your symptoms milder and not as long-lasting.

With the end of the pandemic emergency, people will get their COVID-19 vaccinations in the same

locations where they receive their other routine vaccinations, such as for the flu. It’s also OK for people to get flu and COVID-19 vaccinations at the same time. These vaccines take up to two weeks to be fully effective.

Health insurance will cover the cost for most people to get vaccinated. Adults without health insurance, or whose insurance does not include immunizations, can get COVID-19 vaccine at no cost through the Bridge Access Program. To find a participating location, visit Vaccines.gov or reach out to your Local Health Office.

SAVY MEETING

Come join us for a SAVY meeting! Meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at 10 a.m. in the Roberts Room at GMSS. SAVY is a member-run group for individuals with disabilities which gives them a voice to speak on issues that are important to them. The group teaches members to speak up for themselves, spreading the word about self-advocacy and providing the opportunity to work on projects that benefit themselves and their community.

January Employee Anniversaries

Diana Clark – 2018 (6 years)
Amy Gillilan – 2023 (1 year)
Julie Maskell – 2012 (12 years)

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Ensuring Our Neighbors with Disabilities
are at Home in their Community.

gmssi.org