



VERMONT PRACTITIONER HEALTH PROGRAM 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Vermont Practitioner Health Program Operations

Introduction

The Vermont Practitioner Health Program (VPHP) is a health service of the Vermont Medical Society created for the benefit of Vermont's health professionals. Its purpose is to identify, assess, evaluate, and ensure effective treatment for clinicians whose ability to practice medicine is impaired, or is at the risk of becoming impaired. Physicians (including M.D.s and D.O.s), podiatrists, medical trainees, radiology assistants, anesthesia assistants and physician assistants are eligible to participate. VPHP assists practitioners dealing with impairment or risk of impairment due to use of drugs, including alcohol, as well as impairment caused by any factor that interferes with cognition, judgment, or behavior. This includes mental health challenges and organic causes of cognitive impairment.

Finances

VPHP receives partial financial support under a contract with the Vermont Board of Medical Practice (VBMP) based on legislation passed in 2000 that established funding of the program through a surcharge to Board of Medical Practice licensees' licensing fees. In 2017, the statute was amended to include any medical condition that has the potential to impair a licensee of the VBMP's ability to practice medicine. Funding through the VBMP also increased at that time. In addition to the VBMP contract fees, in 2024, VPHP solicited and received donations from Medical Mutual Insurance Company of Maine, Coverys Insurance, and the University of Vermont Health Network's Captive Insurance Company. As needed, VPHP can also utilize financial support from the income of the VMS Faulkner Trust Fund, which provides for the health and wellbeing of physicians in the State of Vermont, and supports the VPHP program through VMS operating funds.

Program Staff

The Medical Director of VPHP is Nels Kloster MD. Dr. Kloster is a psychiatrist with expertise in substance abuse and mental health. The Medical Director oversees all clinical aspects of the program. Program Administrator, Colleen Magne, performs all day-to-day management functions for the program. Jessa Barnard, Executive Director of the Vermont Medical Society, provides strategic and legal oversight for the program and program staff.

VPHP Committee

Currently an 11-member VPHP Committee, approved by the VMS Board, serves in an advisory capacity to the Medical Director of VPHP on clinical and programming matters. The Committee is structured as a peer review committee with the accompanying legal protection of participants' confidentiality and includes nine physicians and one licensed mental health and drug and alcohol counselor. Committee members are knowledgeable about the impact that practitioner health matters have on health care. The Committee meets at least ten times during the calendar year.

Participating in VPHP

Anyone can contact VPHP with referrals, including practitioners who refer themselves. Referrals come from colleagues, family members, friends, hospitals, and the Board of Medical Practice. Inquiries into the phone lines are responded to promptly and efficiently. When an individual contacts VPHP, the Medical Director assesses the situation and determines the next steps, which may include an assessment of impairment by the Medical Director and, if indicated based on the assessment, a referral for a more in-depth inpatient or outpatient evaluation by a third-party evaluator. The evaluation would include any recommendations for treatment and follow-up care. The Medical Director also assists in guiding the referral source to other treatment or community resources, if needed.

If monitoring is recommended based on the results of an evaluation, practitioners are encouraged to enter a VPHP monitoring contract. The monitoring contract specifies a course of treatment and documents the progress of recovery. The standard contract includes, as applicable to each participant, individual therapy, group support meetings, and regular meetings with a designated VPHP peer advisor ; random urine, hair, blood, or breathalyzer testing; treatment with an addictionologist/psychiatrist; and the oversight of a practice liaison who interacts with the practitioner on a regular basis. VPHP works with RecoveryTrek to provide third party administration to schedule, analyze samples and report results of the testing of hair, nails, blood, and urine. Participants must utilize collection sites that are approved by VPHP, typically through Quest Diagnostics. Participants also have the option to test at home with PROOF testing of urine, blood, and nails. VPHP also utilizes the Soberlink breathalyzer system for participants who are diagnosed with alcohol dependence.

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of the Vermont Practitioner Health Program. VPHP recognizes the importance of respecting the privacy of those who come forward to seek help, and VPHP is committed to devoting its resources to protect that privacy. Participation in VPHP is confidential, unless the Board of Medical Practice is involved with the practitioner's case or other reporting requirements under a participant's contract. VPHP telephone and fax lines are confidential. Electronic mail is encrypted.

VPHP is a member of, and participates in, the Federation of State Physician Health Programs. FSPHP members participate in an email list serve, and attend regional and national conferences,

all of which serve as a forum for advice, sharing of resources and input from other PHPs throughout the USA and Canada.

The Year in Review

The Vermont Practitioner Health Program has completed its twenty-fourth year of operation. The program continues to improve and develop high standards of identifying and supervising practitioners who are at risk of or currently have impairments in practicing medicine. Calls and referrals to VPHP remained steady during 2024. The VPHP committee met via zoom over the course of the year.

Program Participation January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024

VPHP recognition continues to grow in the state of Vermont and, with increased recognition and promotion from the VMS leadership and membership, inquiries have been consistent. The confidential phone line is also used for providing information and to answer any questions regarding the program, including the availability of treatment facilities and monitoring options. When VPHP receives calls that relate to issues outside the scope of our program, we make every attempt to refer those professionals to other appropriate resources in the medical or counseling community.

The following provides a breakdown of types of new practitioner contacts managed during 2024:

- # Of intake assessments performed by VPHP: 20
- Referrals by the VBMP: 16
- # Of referrals by other means including self and transfers from other PHPs: 1
- # Of assessments/evaluations that resulted in a contract with VPHP: 2
- # Of participants contracted with VPHP in 2024: 8
- # Of participants that successfully completed monitoring in 2024: 3
- # Of dropouts or program failures: 0
- # Of professionals determined to be candidates for monitoring but refused: 0
- # Of reportable or non-reportable relapses by contracted professionals: 0
- # Of phone calls related to concerns about impairment in a practitioner: 20

2024 Outreach

In 2024 The Vermont Practitioner Health Program provided the following education and outreach to the medical community:

- Updated and printed VPHP brochures for Board of Medical Practice
- April 2024, Ms. Barnard presented to the UVM Health Network Captive Insurance Company Board regarding VPHP.
- July 2024, Dr. Kloster and Ms. Magne met with UVM Anesthesiology Residents to discuss substance use disorders and other impairments in the workplace.
- August 2024, Dr. Kloster and Ms. Magne gave a presentation on impairment to the 4th-year psychiatry residents.
- September 2024, Dr. Kloster and Ms. Magne gave a presentation to the Board of Bi-State Primary Care.
- Sept 2024, Dr. Kloster, Ms. Magne, Dr. Payne, Dr. Riser, and Dr. Valentine organized a panel discussion with the fourth year UVM College of Medicine students regarding impairment and educating them on physician health.
- October 2024, Dr. Kloster, Ms. Barnard, Ms. Magne, and Dr. Valentine gave the Vermont Board of Medical Practice its annual overview of VPHP and educated new VBMP Board members on VPHP. Ms. Magne also distributed the 2023 VPHP annual report prior to the meeting.
- November 2024, Ms. Magne gave a VPHP overview to VMS Members at the VMS Annual Collaborative Meeting
- In 2024 VPHP and its committee members meet monthly, except in April and August, to discuss policy updates and VPHP participants.

2024 Case Management Committee Members

- Nels Kloster, MD: VPHP Medical Director
- John Valentine, MD: Internal Medicine and Oncology, Roxbury, VT, Committee Chair, Retired
- Greg Ehle, PA, Cardiology PA, UVM Medical Center, Burlington VT
- George Linton, MD: Geriatrics, Montgomery, VT, Retired
- Patrick Mahoney M.D., Orthopedic Surgeon, South Burlington, VT, Retired
- Richard Marasa, M.D., Emergency Medicine, Springfield, VT
- Darrin Michalak, PA, Neurology PA, Kingwood Health Center, Randolph, VT and Lebanon, NH

- Robert Munger, MA, LCMHC, LADC
- Stephen Payne MD: Surgery, St. Albans, VT, Retired
- Elly Riser, MD: Internal Medicine, Burlington, VT
- Robert Venman, MD: Surgery, GP, MA Substance Abuse (Psych), Middlebury, VT, Retired

2024 Budget

January - December 2024

	Total	
	Actual	Budget
Revenue		
4800 VPHP-State of Vermont Contract	133,983.35	100,000.00
4810 VPHP-Faulkner Fund	0.00	20,000.00
4820 VPHP-Program Donations	21,180.00	20,000.00
4900 Transfer from VMS Operating	0.00	13,800.00
Total Revenue	\$ 155,163.35	\$ 153,800.00
Gross Profit	\$ 155,163.35	\$ 153,800.00
Expenditures		
7000 VPHP Expenses		
7010 Accounting	940.49	1,000.00
7040 Council Committee Expenses	279.00	500.00
7065 Meetings, Education	2,450.00	1,000.00
7080 Printing Expense	342.38	200.00
7090 Subscriptions & Dues	2,653.56	3,500.00
7110 Supplies	4.00	0.00
7120 Telephones/Cell Phone	910.16	1,300.00
7150 T&E-AIR, Mileage, Taxi, Hotel, Meals	4,992.53	5,000.00
7210 Personnel-Salary Expenses	64,282.00	64,282.00
7220 Personnel-FICA Expense	500.00	500.00
7230 Personnel-Pension Expense	6,429.00	6,429.00
7240 Personnel-Unemployment Tax	200.00	200.00
7250 Personnel-D&O Insurance	300.00	300.00
7260 Personnel-Health & Dental Ins.	14,116.00	14,116.00
7310 MD Contract	52,500.00	52,500.00
7320 Website, Electronics, Computer	824.13	600.00
7370 Workers Comp Insurance	450.00	450.00
7380 Disability & Liability Insurance	1,606.22	2,000.00
Total 7000 VPHP Expenses	\$ 153,779.47	\$ 153,877.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 153,779.47	\$ 153,877.00
Net Operating Revenue	\$ 1,383.88	\$ - 77.00
Net Revenue	\$ 1,383.88	\$ - 77.00