



2022

Annual Report

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Vermont's Free and Referral Clinics: A Year in Numbers

Each of Vermont's Free & Referral Clinics' (VFRC's) member clinics is an independent organization that uniquely serves the needs of its community. We have two models for care delivery: free-standing clinic and referral clinic.

Free-standing clinics provide a range of medical, dental, and mental health services on site, as well as case management, insurance navigation, and referrals to specialty services and imaging elsewhere in the community.

Referral clinics provide case management, insurance navigation, financial assistance, and care coordination and referrals within their hospital's system. Clinical services are not provided on-site, rather using a holistic approach, referral clinics support patients' needs as they navigate the healthcare system.

Clinic and VFRC operations:

35
PAID
CLINIC
STAFF

262

VOLUNTEER
HEALTHCARE
PROVIDERS

9

LOCATIONS

322

NON-MEDICAL
VOLUNTEERS

1

PAID VFRC
STAFF

1,113

MEDICAL
CLINICS

436

DENTAL
CLINICS HELD

Patient Characteristics:

11,557
UNIQUE
PATIENTS

4,385
OF THOSE PATIENTS
WERE NEW IN 2022

43%
OF OUR PATIENTS
WERE UNDERINSURED

26%
OF OUR PATIENTS ARRIVED
HAVING DELAYED CARE
DUE TO COST OR ACCESS

What brings patients to the free and referral clinics as new patients:

23.4%
ASSISTANCE WITH
INSURANCE
(4.3% of which have Medicare Part D needs)

20%
ORAL
HEALTH

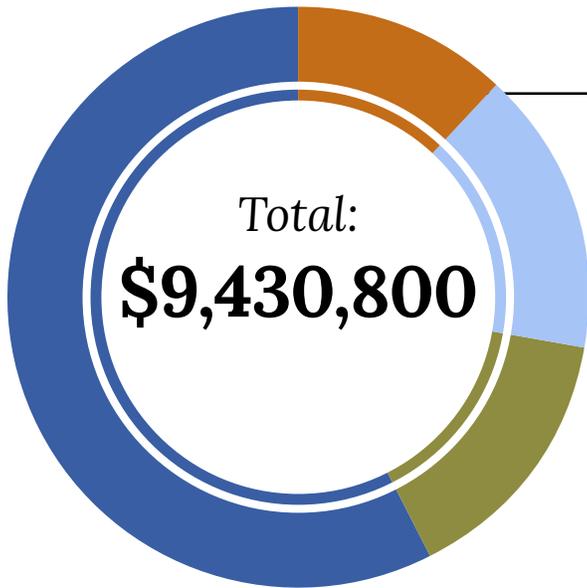
20%

HAVE
OTHER NEEDS
*ranging from
financial
assistance support,
transportation,
help with
paperwork,
mental health
needs, vaccinations,
and labs*

20%
MEDICAL
CARE

15.7%
PRESCRIPTION

2022 Finances

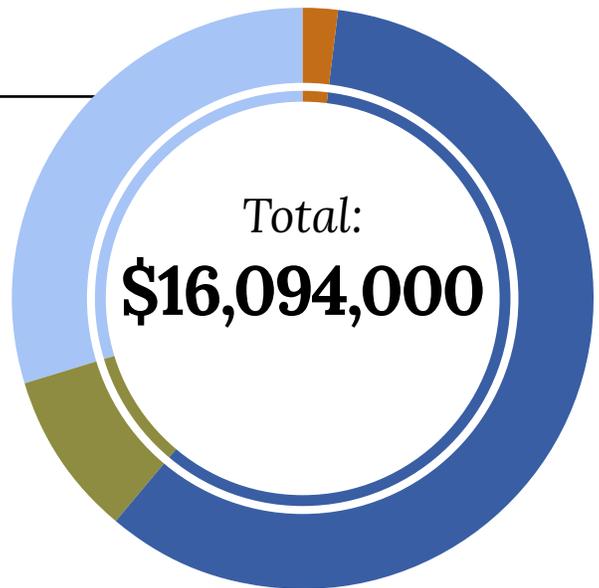


Income

- \$5,400,000** IN-KIND INCOMES
- \$1,130,800** VERMONT LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATIONS
- \$1,500,000** OTHER GRANT INCOME
- \$1,400,400** FUNDRAISING
including individual giving, foundations, town appropriations

Expenses Excluding in-kind prescriptions

- \$2,600,000** PERSONNEL
- \$1,300,000** PROGRAMS
- \$400,000** OCCUPANCY
- \$94,000** VFRC OPERATING BUDGET
**of that \$665,000 for cash and patient fund, supplies, and equipment*



\$4.4
MILLION

FREE
MEDICATION
PROVIDED

\$500,000

WORTH
OF DONATED
VOLUNTEER
CLINICIAN
TIME*

\$5.9
MILLION

IN AVOIDED
EMERGENCY
ROOM COSTS

FOR EVERY
DOLLAR INVESTED

BY THE VT LEGISLATURE,
FREE AND REFERRAL CLINICS
SAVE THE STATE \$6

*This is a conservative estimate. We are in the process of reviewing and revising our method for determining the value of donated volunteer time.

Our Member Clinics

Good Neighbor Health Clinic and Red Logan Dental

Medical and Dental Services

70 North Main St White River Jct, VT 05001
goodneighborhealthclinic.org

Greater Bennington Community Services - Dr. G. Richard Dundas Free Clinic

Medical Services

121 Depot Street, Bennington, VT 05201
gbicsbennington.org

Health Assistance Program at University of Vermont Medical Center

Referral Services Only

128 Lakeside Avenue, Suite 106, Burlington, VT 05401
uvmhealth.org/medcenter/patients-and-visitors/patients/assistance/health-assistance-program

Health Connections at Gifford

Referral Services Only

44 South Main Street, Randolph, VT 05060
giffordhealthcare.org

Open Door Clinic

Medical and Dental Services

100 Porter Drive, Middlebury, VT 05753
opendoormidd.org

People's Health and Wellness Clinic

Medical and Dental Services

553 North Main Street, Barre, VT 05641
phwcv.org

Rutland County Free Clinic

Medical and Dental Services

145 State St, Rutland, VT 05701
rutlandcountyfreeclinic.org

Valley Health Connections

Referral Services Only

268 River Street, Springfield, VT 05156
vtfreeclinics.org/find-a-clinic/valley-health-connections

Mount Ascutney Health Connections, formerly the Windsor Community Health Clinic at Mt Ascutney Hospital

Referral Services Only

289 County Road, Windsor, VT 05089
mtascutneyhospital.org/community-services/community-resources/windsor-community-health-clinic



Good Neighbor Health Clinic and Red Logan Dental

The past year yielded so much growth for the clinics thanks to the Vermont Department of Health. We continue to pride ourselves on quality patient care, and making a difference one patient at a time. Our compassionate volunteer base makes patient care possible for those facing significantly challenging medical circumstances, and we are so grateful to be able to impact lives with the support we receive.



Prior to having restorative dental work at the Red Logan Dental Clinic, Brenda said she often felt “invisible.” She said missing or damaged teeth made her not want to smile or

laugh and eating some foods was difficult. These issues impacted her quality of life and her confidence.

Fast forward to 2023 and after nearly one year of care from Red Logan, her smile is back along with a burst of confidence. “Now I smile all the time,” she says. “I can eat whatever I want and my mouth doesn’t hurt!”



A life-long resident of the Upper Valley, Brenda works for a local hotel. She says that finding the Red Logan Dental Clinic and being treated by Dr. Kristin

Bradley and the team “has changed my life. I can’t thank them enough for what they did for me. I feel so much better and am more confident. *I got my smile back!*”

“ A refugee who had challenges understanding our health system was referred to us with extremely high blood pressure. This person was working, had no insurance, and was unable to access primary care services. Within two appointments, the patient has regulated blood pressure and a prescription regimen. He was so thankful, and repeatedly thanked us for saving his life. ”

– Good Neighbor Health Clinic Medical Staff Member

Several patients entered our doors this year that had not had healthcare services in the past decade. An example of this was one patient who arrived with a mass on their neck and was in critical need of assistance. The patient was sent for scans, and it was discovered they had moderate valve disease. This patient is now established with ENT for a follow up plan and is receiving the care that they need.

Part of our role with patients is establishing trust. Given the challenges so many people in our population face, there is no question that with increasing pressures there is a need for increased mental health support services. Our Dental and Medical team is proud to collaborate with our patients in their care delivery, while creating pathways for patient success in conjunction with patient education. This has created a significant impact in the way patients advocate for themselves, but also for patients to seek the follow up care they need resulting in a better quality of life, and improved health outcomes.

We are looking forward to 2023 and all that it has in store for us!



Greater Bennington Community Services - Dr. G. Richard Dundas Free Clinic

In addition to the Greater Bennington Community Service's food and emergency fund programs, in 2022, the Dr. G. Richard Dundas Free Clinic served 200 patients, providing a range of clinical services, assistance with Vermont Health Connect, smoking cessation, and other critical services. In the summer of 2022, the local Planned Parenthood of Northern New England closed its doors, leading to increased demand on our services for STD testing and other reproductive services. While we were able to offer the necessary testing and utilize the state lab for analysis, we also instituted a monthly reproductive health clinic to fill the gap left by PPNNE.

Many of our patients arrive at our doors with multiple needs that extend beyond just the clinical care and involve coordinating communication between our patient, the clinic, and our many community partners in the Bennington area. Over the course of 2022, we fielded many of these requests for services, including a call from a local resident sponsoring a family of refugees moving to the United States shortly. They were all due for a recommended vaccine and at the

Bennington Free Clinic, we were able to vaccinate all family members except one child under the age of 16. To complete the circle, we connected with our local Department of Health Office and they will make sure he gets what he needs.

In another instance, we worked with a patient who had been living at the local shelter. She had connected with our Clinic Manager during outreach hours and shared that she had been diagnosed with cancer but had been unable to access follow up treatment. The Clinic Manager made an appointment for her at the free clinic, drove to where she was staying to pick her up and made sure she was seen for follow-up care. Additionally, due to her diagnosis, she needs extra absorbent menstrual pads and we are able to help provide these to her regularly.



Health Assistance Program at University of Vermont Medical Center

In 2022, the Health Assistance Program (HAP) at the University of Vermont Medical Center continued to expand access for thousands of Vermonters. During this time, HAP served over 6,000 individual patients, more than 2,400 of whom were new to the program. HAP also successfully expanded its staffing and provided nearly \$4.2 mil in free medications to patients as part of their flagship prescription assistance program. Overall, nearly all HAP's metrics saw significant increases, from patient enrollment and re-enrollment to assistance provided to total patient interactions and medications dispensed. These services are critical to supporting the health and wellbeing of patients around the state.

This is one example of many demonstrating the critical role that HAP plays in healthcare delivery in Vermont. HAP staff provide a safety net often to patients experiencing multiple health issues, chronic conditions such as diabetes, and multiple barriers related to language, age, income, housing, and more.

HAP is available Monday to Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm for the following services:

- Screening for eligibility and financial assistance
- Assistance with enrollment in State and Federal programs
- Connection to hospital programs that provide health care at a reduced cost or free
- Providing resources to help pay for medications and/or medical supplies
- Connection to additional community resources and health information

THE
University of Vermont
HEALTH NETWORK

“ A patient and spouse both living off very fixed limited income and in need of Rx assistance for expensive heart medications. With HAP's assistance they repeatedly spoke their gracious thanks and stated that with this help they could stop picking between buying groceries or getting their needed medicine. ”

– HAP staff member



Health Connections at Gifford

In 2022, Health Connections at Gifford served 592 patients, 180 of whom were new to the program. Patient needs ranged from support navigating Vermont Health Connect, accessing Medicare and selecting a Medicare Part D plan, connecting with social or prescription services, and enrolling in patient financial assistance to help with the cost of care.

Health Connections provides the link to a wide range of health care services, both at Gifford and in the greater community. Gifford's financial assistance program is offered to all patients living within our service areas who

meet financial requirements and receive non-elective, medically necessary services. Patients from other areas also may qualify if the services were emergent or if the services are not available in the area in which they reside.

Health Connections at Gifford is open from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.



Gifford Health Care



Open Door Clinic

The year 2022 was marked by transitions at ODC - new staff members, and a new clinic space. We have welcomed the opportunity to continue tailoring our services to the unique and evolving needs of the Addison County area. We continue to depend on dozens of volunteers—medical providers and interpreters—to deliver respectful, welcoming care. Below, we share two patient stories from the past year.

Newly formed women’s support group

In the fall of 2022, we launched the first women’s support group for our Spanish speaking patients. Eight women attended this 9-week series. The public library in Middlebury offered their community room for our gathering.

Themes discussed were diverse – from trust within relationships, to roles one has as a woman in a couple and in society, living situation challenges for women who live in housing with other, primarily male, farm workers, to time allotted for spirituality.

It was a beautiful experience. Sharing, wondering and being open to stories brought to the group every Tuesday, without judgment or fear. Our success with this new program in 2022 has encouraged us to continue patient support groups and other wellness offerings in 2023..

First cleaning

Carlito (not his real name) is a trim, smartly dressed man in his early thirties who hails from Chiapas, Mexico, and works at a local dairy. Carlito first accessed ODC services at on-farm outreach in late 2020, where he requested vaccines against COVID and influenza. In November 2022, an upper tooth began to trouble him. He reached out to ODC for a dental appointment, his first ever. ODC’s Dental Coordinator gave him the first available spot. Due to the recent retirement of our staff hygienist, it wasn’t until April 2023.

Carlito arrived with a hesitant smile at ODC’s dental clinic, hosted by Middlebury Dental Group. Led with cheerful competence by our interim hygienist and a volunteer

interpreter, he gamely worked his way through x-rays, and a cleaning that took a lifetime of calculus back to the gumline. An active brushing regimen had served Carlito well; adding flossing and a nightguard would curb interstitial decay and wear. Staff scheduled a filling, recommended appointments for scaling and root planing—cleaning below the gumline— and a wisdom tooth extraction.

Carlito reached back out to the clinic a week later. A foot injury, caused by a cow’s misstep, had become infected and begun to cause leg numbness. A volunteer doctor evaluated him at our weekly clinic, and with our nurse case manager referred him to a general surgeon. A front desk volunteer helped Carlito fill out the sliding scale fee paperwork to right-size the cost of services though UVM Health Network.

This trust-based, wraparound care is Open Door’s hallmark. Rooted in respectful, culturally informed engagement, it centers the patient as a whole, dignified person.

“
Gracias a tí por hacer el grupo y regalarme tiempo” - *Thank you for creating the group and gifting us this time.*

Gracias a todas es bueno poder hablar sin temor” - *Thank you to all of you. It’s good to speak without fear.*

”

People's Health and Wellness Clinic

This last year was the People's Health and Wellness Clinic's first full year returning to "normal" post-pandemic services, including bringing volunteers back into our building while continuing to emphasize telehealth as an option for people with underlying health conditions or transportation problems.

One of the most impactful programs for the People's Clinic is the ongoing off-site healthcare clinics hosted at area hotels and motels where Vermont's unhoused population have lived since the start of the pandemic. Once a month, staff and volunteers from the clinic would set up at one of these locations and provide primary and preventative care. Many of these patients have not seen a doctor in many years and have complex healthcare problems. These clinics are challenging, but our volunteers often find them rewarding and the impact on the patient's lives can be transformative.

The clinic also participated in a farm food sharing program that provided weekly deliveries of farm fresh food for the families of 10 patients at the clinic. This program was supported by a donation from Central Vermont Medical Center and allowed the Clinic to promote healthy eating and wellness techniques to our patient population.



Another highlight of the last year was the creation and approval of the Clinic's first Strategic Plan in 15 years. This new three-year plan

was the focus of the clinic's Board of Directors throughout 2022 and was approved in January 2023. The goals of this plan include expanding outreach to marginalized and vulnerable communities and finding new financial resources that would allow the clinic to expand and offer additional services.

The Clinic's dental hygiene program continues to grow in popularity, due to the lack of oral healthcare in Vermont.

We saw a record number of patients and many of them had complex problems requiring extractions, which the clinic and our patients cannot



afford to pay for. There is also huge demand for financial resources for patients to afford dentures and implants. We continue to research options to find financial help for our patients to have nice smiles.

Despite the challenges of operating a free clinic in a complex and dysfunctional healthcare system, the staff and volunteers are motivated by the success stories we see each day. We received this email from a patient last year.

"I didn't have health insurance when I fell and hurt my shoulder in March. I knew an ER or urgent care visit would be expensive, but I was also too injured to work. People's Health offered me a better choice. I was able to see a doctor within days of my injury. As I was making my appointment, a staff member mentioned that I may qualify for health insurance with subsidies.

By the end of that week, I had painkillers for my shoulder and health insurance coverage that would start the following month. It would have never happened without People's Health.

When you don't have insurance, everything about your health is a hurdle. The staff at People's Health helped me out of a tough spot and then made sure I'd have more options next time."



Rutland County Free Clinic

Mary is employed part-time at a local grocery store. She was offered a few extra hours and she accepted, not knowing she would lose her Medicaid coverage due to the few extra dollars she would be earning. Suffering from skin irritation that she was unable to cure, Mary phoned the Rutland County Free Clinic (RCFC), completed the intake process and was scheduled to see a volunteer practitioner at the next medical clinic two days later.

During Mary's triage care, she shares more of her current health status with the nurse. Mary was receiving treatment for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) when she was insured with Medicaid more than 2 years ago. But since she lost her insurance due to the minimal increase in income, she was unable to sustain her treatment plan.

Even when Mary was able to re-enroll with Medicaid, she was informed by the primary care practice where she was previously treated that they were not currently accepting new Medicaid patients, which they had determined was her current status. Mary's exam at the RCFC revealed an extremely low oxygen level and her blood pressure reading indicated the potential for a hypertensive crisis. She was referred to the local emergency room at Rutland Regional Medical Center (RRMC) for further evaluation and treatment.

Mary was admitted to RRMC for inpatient treatment later that day where she stayed for nearly 2 weeks. She was diagnosed with severe hypoxia, congestive heart failure and hyperglycemia.

For Mary and many others in similar situations, it is not uncommon to become so accustomed to the everyday declining condition of your health that it takes an acute annoyance such as an irritated patch of skin that leads you to seek care. And the care they find could save their life. Mary will continue to receive care from the RCFC until such time that her primary care office is able to take her back. When this happens, the RCFC staff will gladly assist with her transition to what we hope will be her uninterrupted and permanent primary care home. The RCFC works to fill the gaps in our healthcare system by providing temporary, non-urgent care. The story of Mary represents only one of those gaps of the many we address nearly every day.



Valley Health Connections

The year 2022 was marked by staffing changes, patient navigation success and challenges, and our ongoing commitment to supporting people in our community through the challenging healthcare decisions they make every day. Our stories from 2022 reflect the breadth of our work as well as the varied and pervasive gaps that our patients face when trying to access healthcare. We see the ways in which healthcare intersects with language services needs, food access, transportation, childcare services, housing (to name only a few) and we are committed to continually evolving to meet these needs.

Access to You First and Hospital Financial Assistance

We have been working with a Portuguese family for about 2 months now. Originally, we were contacted by our local school system for help as one child needed insurance to get immunizations to enter the school system and the family could not afford to pay for these on their own. Upon meeting the family, we learned that they only spoke Portuguese and had encountered multiple barriers accessing a variety of necessary services.

We have since been able to enroll all children in Dr. Dynasaur and filled out 3squares paperwork. The adults have all been enrolled in Emergency Medicaid and have been signed up for financial assistance for the local hospitals. Eligible adults were also enrolled in the Vermont Department of Health's breast and cervical cancer screening program, YouFirst, and set up with longer-term medical homes since one of the adults is a recent cancer survivor.

Our experience with this family made it absolutely clear that we needed language services in our office. We are now set up with two iPads and can access Language Line. It has been a joy to work with this family and learn how we can improve our services and systems to meet our patients' needs.

Access to Dentures

Access to dentures is an ongoing and pervasive issue across our service area and Vermont as a whole. Our staff received a call in 2022 from a local woman regarding help for dentures. She had been saving up money but has an extremely limited Social Security income. She needed replacement dentures as her set was so old that it no longer fit her mouth properly and was causing sores making it difficult to eat.

She told staff that she had saved up \$300 to go towards the cost, but knew it was nowhere near what was needed to replace the dentures. Our staff worked with Senior Solutions to help with a little bit of extra funding and then Valley Health Connections was able to cover the rest through donations. She will be receiving her new set of dentures in just a few months!



Mount Ascutney Health Connections

*Formerly the Windsor Community Health Clinic
at Mount Ascutney Hospital*

The Windsor Community Health Clinic has changed the name to Mount Ascutney Health Connections. We have changed the name and the staff but we are still a referral based clinic trying to help bridge the gap for care. We help patients stay out of the emergency or worse by assisting them to get help with medications, dental help for those who qualify, assistance with obtaining insurance and maneuvering through the healthcare system. Reflecting on 2022, two stories highlight about the people we've been able to assist highlight our work.

We've had someone who went to the Emergency Room several times due to the fact that she wasn't insured and didn't think she could be covered. She had a disabled child at home and that was her main priority. Finally after all the times in the Emergency Room for over a year she decided taking care of herself was the best way to take care of her family. We were able to get her health insurance through Vermont Health Connect and was able to get the prescription assistance she needed to help cover her costs. She didn't think we could help her be healthier. We also filled out a financial assistance application to try to help with the medical bills that were coming in. She's now keeping her appointments and taking her medications as prescribed.

We had another patient at the verge of desperation. He lost his provider and couldn't find another one in the same practice. He was on psychiatric medications and couldn't find anyone to renew his medicine that he so desperately needed. After being turned down several times by emergency rooms because he wasn't appropriate for the Emergency Room. He was ready to end his life. One of our staff advocated for him and got him into Mount Ascutney Hospital's Walk In Clinic. The provider was able to renew his prescriptions that he really needed.

Even though we are a small clinic our deeds are important. The current trend of not having enough primary care and mental health providers to take care of patients is so difficult for so many. We try our best to improve the lives of those we serve, it's an honor to help our community.



**Mt. Ascutney Hospital
and Health Center**
Dartmouth-Hitchcock





Who We Are

Staff

Olivia Sharrow, MPH
Executive Director

Board of Directors

Samantha Ball, MBA - Chair
Valley Health Connections

Heidi Sulis, MPH - Vice Chair
Open Door Clinic

Tia Poalino - Treasurer
Rutland County Free Clinic

Natalie Basil - Secretary
Dr. G. Richard Dundas Free Clinic

William Seitz
Health Assistance Program at the UVM Medical Center

Elizabeth Austin, MHA
Good Neighbor Health Clinic

Michele Packard
Health Connections at Gifford Medical Center

Dan Barlow
People's Health and Wellness Clinic

Kelli Rapp
Mount Acutney Health Connections



125 Tremont St. | Barre, VT 05641
802-448-4280 | vtfreeclinics.org

Our Mission

To support member free clinics in Vermont that identify gaps and provide access to care, via on site or by referral services, to uninsured and under-insured people.