



State of Vermont
Agency of Human Services
280 State Drive, Center Building
Waterbury, VT 05671-1000

Global Commitment Register

October 10, 2023

GCR 23-115
FINAL

Medicaid Investment: Designated and Specialized Service Agencies (DA/SSA) Workforce Investment

Policy Summary:

The Vermont Medicaid program established a Medicaid health-related investment to expand the existing Vermont Care Partners Employee Investment Program, a tuition reimbursement and loan repayment program available to Designated and Specialized Service Agency staff. This fund will improve access for Vermont Medicaid beneficiaries to quality mental health, substance use, and developmental disability professionals by strengthening and supporting DA/ SSA staff to pursue studies related to current or future work.

The goal of this funding is to improve overall access to mental health, substance use, and developmental disability services and to ensure staffing levels across Vermont are adequate to provide these services to Medicaid beneficiaries. This funding aims to improve access to community behavioral health and developmental disability care by incentivizing qualified providers to work at Designated and Specialized Service agencies by promoting entry into the behavioral health and developmental disability field through tuition reimbursement and loan repayment. This investment will further improve health equity for the uninsured, underinsured, and Medicaid-eligible individuals in Vermont by reducing stigma and improving visibility of important mental health, substance use, and developmental disability resources.

Effective Date:

October 1, 2023

Authority/Legal Basis:

[Global Commitment to Health Waiver](#)

Population Affected:

All Vermont Medicaid beneficiaries and Vermont Medical Mental Health and SUD providers.

Fiscal Impact:

The estimated gross annualized budget impact is \$6,899,724.

Public Comment Period:

The public comment period ended on October 1, 2023. [State response to comments can be found here.](#)

To be added to the GCR email list, send an email to AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov.

Additional Information:

The updated investment template for the DA/ SSA Workforce Investment can be found on the following pages.

ATTACHMENT S
New Investment Application Template

For each new investment, the state must submit the following information to CMS as described in STC 11.6.

Date	9/13/23
Investment Title	DA/SSA Workforce Investment
Estimated Amount	\$6,899,724
Time Period	10/1/2023 – 6/30/2025
Department	Mental Health
Category	Increase access of quality health care for uninsured, underinsured, and Medicaid beneficiaries
Project Objective, Targeted Outcomes, and Impact to Health Equity	
<p>This funding is to address workforce needs at the Designated and Specialized Service Agencies.</p> <p>This program is a strategic investment that expands the supply of high-quality mental health, substance use disorder treatment professionals, and developmental disability staff, providing services in Designated Agencies (DAs) and Specialized Service Agencies (SSAs).</p> <p>The three main outcome-tracking elements encompass recruitment, retention, and overall program success. Individual Agencies report outcomes and submit their tracking data to Vermont Care Partners (VCP) on a quarterly basis. VCP will then submit quarterly reports to the Vermont Department of Mental Health.</p> <p>Tuition assistance and loan repayments support staff education at both the bachelor's and master's degree levels and include studies and loan repayment for staff including, but not limited to the following professions: Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, Master level therapists, direct service professionals, School Based Clinicians, behavior interventionists, substance use counselors, and case managers. The most commonly pursued degrees are in psychology, social work, counseling, education, early education, clinical mental health counseling, Applied Behavioral Analysis, and human services.</p> <p>The goal of this funding is to improve overall access to behavioral health (mental health and substance use), and developmental services and to ensure staffing levels are adequate to provide these essential services. This funding aims to improve access to health care services by incentivizing qualified providers to work at Designated and Specialized Service agencies and by promoting entry into the fields of behavioral health and development disability supports through tuition reimbursement and loan repayment. This investment will further improve health equity for the uninsured, underinsured, and Medicaid-eligible individuals in Vermont by reducing stigma and improving the visibility of important mental health, substance use, and developmental disability resources in Vermont.</p>	

<p>Project Description</p> <p>This must include descriptions of specific terms associated with eligibility, benefits and services, and how the state intends to operationalize the program (e.g., population served, provider types, provider qualifications, methodology for incentive payments)</p>
<p>The Department of Mental Health is funding the Vermont Care Partners Employee Investment Program for all Designated and Specialized Service Agency staff. All funds will be utilized as tuition reimbursement and/or loan repayment and would be maintained in a centralized pool. Reports on utilization, expenditures, and outcomes will be made by VCP to the department on a quarterly basis.</p>
<p>Employee Eligibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition reimbursement for individuals pursuing degrees to become bachelor’s-level direct services staff and master’s-level clinicians and nurses. • Loan repayment for bachelor’s-level direct service staff and master’s-level clinicians and nurses. • Applicants/employees are required to pursue [or have previously pursued] a degree relevant to current or future job responsibilities. These funds will not be awarded for expenses related to conferences, training, academic supplies, or other expenses, including fees. Employees become eligible for the program upon meeting their agency’s benefits eligibility requirements, completing their agency’s introduction/probationary period, and they must remain in good standing throughout the course of the agreement. • Awardees must complete a program-specific service obligation to provide mental health, developmental disability supports, and/or substance use disorder services at their awarding DS/SSA in Vermont • Awardees must successfully complete coursework to qualify for tuition reimbursement.
<p>Employee Application Process</p> <p>Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Each applicant must complete the applicable standard VCP Education Investment Program application and receive their Program or Division Director’s approval to submit the application to the Human Resources Department of their respective agency.</p>
<p>How does the state ensure there is no duplication of federal funding?</p>
<p>The Agency of Human Services operates under a Cost Allocation Plan (CAP) which is approved quarterly by HHS. The CAP ensures there is no duplication of funding because total expenses are allocated to the benefitting federal program.</p>
<p>Source of non-federal share</p>
<p>State General Fund</p>
<p>How does the state ensure that the investment does not include any activities listed in STC 11.6 (Investment Approval Process)?</p>

Attachment S

AHS staff have reviewed project descriptions to ensure that the investment does not include any activities listed in STC #11.5 and will monitor program expenditures to ensure continued compliance with this requirement.

The state assures that in reporting costs, the state and providers must adhere to 45 CFR §75 Uniform Administration Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Health and Human Services (HHS) Awards and 42 CFR §413 Principles of Reasonable Cost Reimbursement. Pursuant to 45 CFR §75.302(a), the state must have proper fiscal control and accounting procedures in place to permit the tracing of funds to a level of expenditures adequate to establish that such funds have not been used in violation of applicable statutes. Costs must be supported by adequate source documentation.