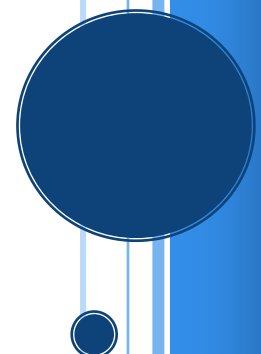
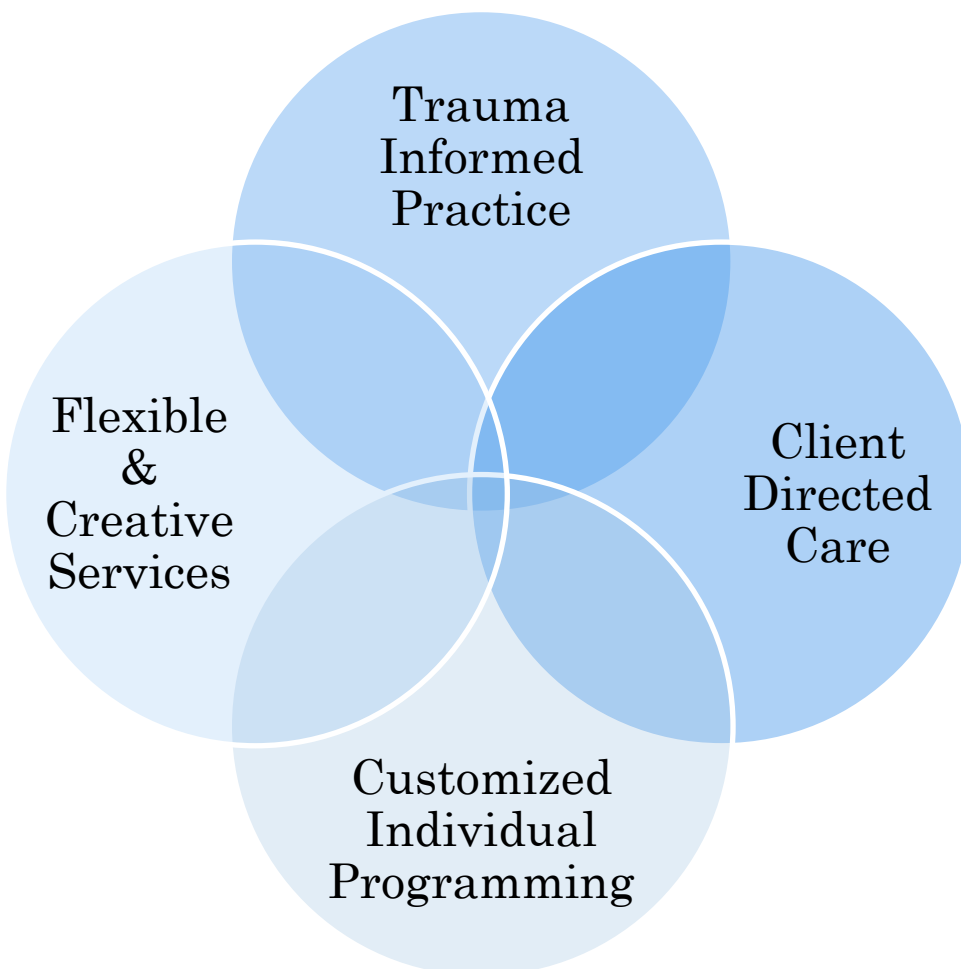




**PROGRAM
PARTICIPANT & AGENCY
HANDBOOK**

Caring for Vermont's Youth, Families & Adults since 1984



PROGRAM PARTICIPANT & AGENCY HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

Welcome to NFI	2
Our Mission Statement	2
NFI Anti-Racism Statement	2
Our Programs	2
Partners in Care – Promoting Healthy Behaviors and Relationships	3
Health Team	3
Client and Staff Safety	3
Access to Care	4
Referrals, Intake & Waitlist Process	4
Treatment Agreement	4
Privacy and Confidentiality	4
Program Participant Rights, Responsibilities & Rules	5
Program Participant Rights:	5
Program Participant Responsibilities	6
Program Participant Satisfaction	6
Satisfaction Survey	6
Complaints, Grievances & Appeals	6
Discharge	8
Relocation (<i>from Staff Living/Residential Programs</i>)	8
Resources	9
Legal Definitions	10
Appendix*	11
Grievance and appeals procedure:	11
Types of Discharges/ Changes to Location	12
Contact Us	13

Welcome to NFI

Welcome to NFI Vermont. This Program Participant & Agency Handbook is designed to provide a general introduction to the agency, important consumer procedures, and resources. We hope you find the Handbook useful. If you need help understanding information in this Handbook, please ask a staff member.

We have a variety of services and supportive tools to help you. Our team members look forward to getting to know you and to join with you respectfully and in relationship to work towards desired goals.

NFI Vermont is Center of Excellence (COE) certified by Vermont Care Partners (VCP). We are also proud to be a Child Placing agency as designated by the Department for Children and Families.

Our Mission Statement

The mission of NFI Vermont is to embrace strengths and acknowledge struggles as we join with youth, adults, families and communities to promote growth and healing.

We are dedicated to providing flexible, creative, culturally sensitive trauma specific service and crisis stabilization.

NFI Anti-Racism Statement

We at NFI know it is imperative to acknowledge that racism impacts all of us and causes trauma. If you choose to work with us, we commit to listening, acknowledging, and validating your lived experience. We welcome your perspective and hope to earn your trust as partners. The effects of racism are complex and a daily struggle that we will work to support you in mitigating as we plan and implement our shared work. We join in the challenge to advocate for change in the broader community, systems, and institutions. We commit to doing our work and welcome feedback from any partners, especially those we serve.

Our Programs

- ❖ **Wraparound**
Brattleboro Community Alternatives Program (BCAP), Community Based Program (CBS), Diagnostic and Assessment Program (DAP), ST. Albans Community Alternatives Program (SACAP)
- ❖ **Residential**
Allenbrook, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) program, Group Home, Hospital Diversion North & South, Shelburne House, Village House
- ❖ **Educational**
East Meadow School, Cornerstone School, The Arlington School, Turning Points, Centerpoint School & Adolescent Services
- ❖ **Therapeutic Foster Care**
- ❖ **NFI Family Center (outpatient mental health clinic)**
- ❖ **Crossroads (Intensive Outpatient and Mental Health Program)**
- ❖ **Child and Family Supports program**
- ❖ **DCF Case Aides Program**
- ❖ **Post Permanency**

Partners in Care – Promoting Healthy Behaviors and Relationships

Health Team

We are your partner in care. Please let us know whom your community health team includes. It is important for us to be aware of who your primary care physician, and any alternative service providers, or settings you may be associated with or have considered.

If you need help in identifying a primary care physician and/or mental health provider, our staff can help. If you change or add a health provider, please let us know so we can serve you better.

Through the course of services, there are opportunities to review program appropriateness and your satisfaction with our services. We seek and encourage regular feedback with our staff and collaboration with your community care partners.

Client and Staff Safety

Open communication, mutual respect, and timely exchange of information are important to maintain physical and emotional safety during program participation. Each program site has an emergency/evacuation plan and staff are instructed in Universal precautions, CPR, and first aid measures. Additional health and safety protocols are in accordance with Vermont law and guidance.

Program participants assist to develop individualized safety plans. The safety plan is accessible to direct care staff, management, and the crisis response team to help support the participant in their care.

In order to help prevent and manage situations with imminent risk of physical harm to program participant or others, staff are trained in physical intervention techniques. Although, NFI does not endorse physically aversive* procedures, devices, or treatment, when necessary, restraint* may be used, and/or local law enforcement and/or emergency management services may be involved.

Weapons, tobacco, and the possession of/use of all illegal drugs on agency property is prohibited. Agency policies are in place to respond to violations of prohibited items, however, consequences will differ according to your program.

Access to Care

Referrals, Intake & Waitlist Process

NFI is a Specialized Service Agency (SSA) within the state of VT Department of Mental Health providers system. As a SSA within a larger system of care, the referral and admissions process for NFI programs varies. Many of the NFI VT programs receive referrals directly from the State, school districts, and local Designated Agencies. Program Directors review the referral information with the referral source and potential program participant/representative. NFI determines whether an individual's application for service is accepted, declined, or requires further review. Once accepted, potential program participants may be scheduled to meet the program staff and/or tour the program. This helps to determine program appropriateness, program expectations and availability. Orientation may include a review of the program's services, site, expectations, and assigned staff member(s).

Staff will help explain the forms and information in the intake packet.

* Some of our outpatient programs may accept self-referrals or referrals from a member of the individual's community health care team.

Treatment Agreement

NFI provides innovative, creative and flexible mental health and educational services based on the program participant(s) needs.

It is important for you and your support network to help us identify goals for your treatment/education. An individualized treatment or learning plan is developed and may be adjusted as needed. Depending on the program, the treatment plan may include natural supports, supportive community agencies, safety, discharge planning, care preferences and treatment or education goals. If at any time you have questions about your treatment plan, ask the program staff.

Program services and treatment activities may include face-to-face interaction, phone calls, electronic communication, Telehealth sessions, and in-person or remote learning tools.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Following Federal HIPAA & FERPA guidelines (See *Appendix**), NFI VT has policies in place to help protect the privacy and confidentiality of your personal health and educational information. We will use and disclose your health information for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations as outlined in the *Notice of Privacy Practices*.

Authorization (permission forms) are provided prior to start of services and prior to the release of your personal information.

Under certain legal circumstances or incidents (See *Appendix**), information may be released without your permission, in cases of:

Medical emergency, Suspected Child Abuse and neglect, Communicable Disease/Public Health initiatives, threats of violence/danger to self or others

Together, we can help protect your information by sharing information on a “need to know basis”, limiting personal information posted on social media and electronic devices, practicing safe internet use, and storing personal information in a secure location.

Program Participant Rights, Responsibilities & Rules

NFI Vermont strives to provide respectful, dignified, humane and fair treatment regardless of race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and ethnicity.

Posted at each NFI location are the Program Participant Rights & Responsibilities and program specific rules. It is important that you have an opportunity to discuss the rules and responsibilities with the staff, understand and agree to the program expectations, your treatment plan and the program environment.

****Program Specific Rules and Expectations are provided by the program****

Program Participant Rights:

- ❖ Right to information on eligibility criteria, funding priorities, available services, programs, practitioners, practice guidelines, utilization management practices, and complaint procedure
- ❖ Right to an Individualized Service Plan that includes relevant service agencies and your health team/doctor
- ❖ Right to review your health information, understand your condition and treatment options
*See Notice of Privacy Practices for additional rights regarding access, amending, or restricting your health information
- ❖ Right to receive services from culturally sensitive staff
- ❖ Right to participate in decision- making and treatment choices, consistent with age and ability
- ❖ Right to communicate in your primary language and/or mode of communication
- ❖ Right to provide input, feedback and suggestions regarding your physical, emotional and mental comfort
- ❖ Right to refuse or terminate services (Exception: possible consequences if service is court ordered)
- ❖ Right to request change in a staff assignment

- ❖ Right to information security, confidentiality and privacy of your records; when permitted by law, records may be released without permission
- ❖ Right to be represented by legal counsel or advocate of your choice- right to all legal protection and due process for status as an outpatient and inpatient, both voluntary and involuntary, as defined under Vermont law
- ❖ Right to access basic goods, services and private space in the context of the therapeutic treatment plan
- ❖ Freedom from retaliation, threat, denial, or discrimination
- ❖ Modifications may be made to the physical environment, a task, or mode of communication; (as defined by the ADA) to reduce the unintentional exclusion or barrier of an individual with a disability, to access a service

Program Participant Responsibilities

- ❖ Responsibility to provide complete information needed to the NFI Vermont staff to help develop an appropriate plan of care, appropriate services and supports
- ❖ Responsibility to participate in the treatment plan, report any changes to medications or your health/condition and any changes to your health team
- ❖ Responsibility to follow agreed-upon service, to the best of your ability.
- ❖ Responsibility to report treatment or appointment challenges.
- ❖ Responsibility to treat staff and caregivers, property with dignity and respect including others who may be different than you.
- ❖ Responsibility to report abuse and /or share concerns.

Program Participant Satisfaction

Satisfaction Survey

Your input and satisfaction is important to us. Staff provide Satisfaction Surveys about every 6 months and at discharge. We encourage feedback when completing the survey, or at any time.

Complaints, Grievances & Appeals

During the course of your treatment, you may have a complaint with a service or staff member. You are encouraged to express your complaint, as soon as possible. This helps us to address the complaint in a timely fashion.

At any time, you can speak to the staff directly or write to us regarding your complaint. Most complaints can be resolved quickly with regular feedback. A meeting may be scheduled to address unresolved issues, disagreements with or dissatisfaction with

services. It is important you/your representative participate in this meeting to determine a satisfactory resolution. If unable to determine a resolution, the NFI Grievance and Appeal Coordinator reviews the complaint information and provides you with additional assistance or next steps.

If you wish to meet with a staff member not directly on your treatment team, or to file a Grievance or Appeal, you may also contact:

NFI Grievance and Appeal Coordinator

Jo Berry, LICSW- Clinical Quality Systems Manager

30 Airport Rd, S. Burlington VT

Phone: (802) 658-0040 Email: joberry@nafi.com

- ❖ Vermont has a NO retaliation policy. Services will not be affected if you file a Grievance or Appeal. No staff member will treat you poorly if you express concerns, and you are entitled to a timely agency decision regarding your concerns and reasons for decision.
- ❖ Related to the nature and level of the concern, NFI staff may be required to contact law enforcement, the Department of Children and Families or the Department of Mental Health or a legal entity for additional reporting.
- ❖ Grievances and Appeals are recorded and submitted to the State of Vermont in the Global Commitment to Health Database

For clients in a Wraparound (CBS, BCAP, and SACAP), Diagnostic Assessment or Residential Treatment program (Shelburne House, Village House, and DBT). See *Appendix** for detailed procedure and timelines to file a Grievance or Appeal

Discharge

Beginning at intake, you/representative, our staff, and DMH/DCF (if applicable) establish a plan for discharge. The discharge plan may remain the same or may evolve depending on your need.

Relocation (*from Staff Living/Residential Programs*)

Relocation may result from a behavior, medical condition, an emergency, for respite, or due to inappropriate placement:

Relocating a client without consent is not desirable, and generally limited to last resort for instances if program participant:

- Danger to self and others,
- Violates program rules,
- Refuses to participate in goals,
- Intrudes on the rights/safety or well-being of others

The Program Director and Regional Director will meet with the program participant/representative, and referring agency on record (when applicable) to discuss the recommended reason for relocation, placement options/resources, and circumstances if you do not go to the new placement.

A relocation related to inappropriate placement or refusal to participate requires 30d notice so that the program participant/representative has time to transition

Whenever possible, tours or meeting with new placement are arranged prior to the move

When appropriate, staff and client/representative will discuss and plan for a return, including conditions and expectations of that return.

See *Appendix** for definition of discharge types

Resources

Vermont Legal Aid office or Office of Health Care Ombudsman
(800) 917-7787

For Residential Licensing and Special Investigations:
Residential Licensing & Special Investigations
Department of Children and Families
Family Services Division
280 Street Drive, HC 1 North
Waterbury, VT 05671-2401
Phone: (802) 241-2131

For Disability Rights Vermont:
141 Main Street, Suite #7
Montpelier, VT 05602
Phone: (800) 834-7890

For Human Rights Commission:
14-16 Baldwin Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633
Phone: (802) 828-2480

Office of Professional Regulations (OPR)
89 Main Street, third Floor
Montpelier VT 05602
(802) 828-1505
www.sec.state.vt.us/professional-reg

Department of Mental Health (DMH)
280 State Drive NOB 2 North
Waterbury, VT 05671
(802) 241-0090
<https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/>

Vermont Agency of Education (AOE)
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05620
(802) 828-1130

Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) - (Grievance/Appeal)
280 State Drive
Waterbury, VT 05671
(802) 879-5900
<http://dvha.vermont.gov/>

Health Access member services (fair hearing)
(800) 250-8427

Department for Children and Families (DCF)
280 State Drive, HC 1 N
Waterbury, VT 05671
http://dcf.vermont.gov/main_contacts

Legal Definitions

Authorized Representative

An individual, either appointed by the client or authorized under state law, to act on behalf of the client; whom has all of the rights and responsibilities of the client they represent

Aversive Procedure/Event

One that uses unpleasant physical or sensory stimuli in an attempt to reduce undesired behavior; cannot be avoided or escaped, unpleasant, and/or is pain inducing.

Federal Education Privacy Laws (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affords parents the right to have access to their children's education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records. When a student turns 18 years old, or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, the rights under FERPA transfer from the parents to the student ("eligible student").

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (*HIPAA*) is a federal *law* that required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge.

Incident

Threats or actions which may result in significant harm to the health and/or welfare of our clients, staff, facilities, public, or may bring about adverse publicity.

* May include criminal activity involving law enforcement, abuse, neglect, exploitation, serious injury, medical emergency, death, missing person, restraint, or information security

Informed Consent

Informed consent means that a person understands their health condition and what the proposed treatment is and results in the person's authorization or agreement to permit a specific intervention, treatment, or service.

Notice of Privacy Practices

HIPAA-mandated notice that covered entity (NFI Vermont) must give to program participants that describes how a covered entity may use and disclose their protected health information, and informs them of their legal rights regarding protected health information (PHI).

Restraint

Physical restriction or containment of an individual until individual is able to regain composure

Specialized Service Agency (SSA) may operate in more than one geographic area of the state and provide a distinctive approach to service delivery and coordination or provide services that meet distinctive individual needs.

Appendix*

Grievance and appeals procedure:

COMPLAINT is defined as an unresolved issue, “unprofessional or unsafe conduct” of a program staff member, disagreement with or dissatisfaction with services.

Complaints may be expressed orally or written to the staff, at any time. They are reported to the Program Director and/or senior management and information is gathered to help address the issue. Within 1 - 5 days, you/your representative will be invited to participate in a meeting to determine a potential action plan and resolution. An Action Plan form is completed/signed to indicate that the complaint is either resolved or further action is required for a satisfactory disposition:

- ❖ Immediate action and/or separation of client and staff member may be necessary; related to the nature of the complaint. DCF, law enforcement and/or legal entity may be contacted for direction and next action steps, or
- ❖ Further action may include filing a Grievance or Appeal

GRIEVANCE is defined as dissatisfaction with the quality of treatment or services, accessibility of services, program management, a program or policy decision, service provider, or you feel your “rights have not been respected”.

Initially, the process for reporting/filing a Grievance follows the process for reporting a Complaint. However, we recommend reporting your Grievance within 30 days so as to address the Grievance as quickly as possible. Post the meeting, the Action Plan form is reviewed by the

- a) NFI Grievance and Appeals Coordinator; who then forwards client information to (b), or
 - b) You may directly contact the Medicaid Grievance and Appeal (G&A) Manager, through: <http://dvha.vermont.gov/appeals-and-fair-hearings> (*Attachment 3.D*)
- ❖ The Medicaid (G&A) Manager acknowledges the Grievance, in writing, within 5 days of receipt of notification from program participant or representative
 - A file is opened in the State Grievance and Appeal database
 - ❖ The Medicaid (G&A) Manager provides a disposition to the Grievance, in writing, within 90 days

APPEAL is defined as a disagreement with a decision or action or proposed changes to type of, amount of services, offered as part of the treatment plan.

Program participant will be informed, either directly from the Medicaid program or from the NFI program staff, regarding an upcoming termination, suspension, or reduction of a

service. Reason for the potential change is based upon a Notice of Adverse Benefit Determination. If program participant /representative disagree with this change, the program participant then has **60** days to request an Appeal, verbally or in writing.

For an “Expedited Appeal” you must submit an appeal before the effective date of the proposed action or within 11 days of the Medicaid Program sending the Notice of Adverse Benefit Determination.

Similar to reporting a Complaint, the staff would help you complete an Action Plan form. The request to file an Appeal is reviewed by

- a) the NFI Grievance and Appeal Coordinator; who then will forward information to (b), Or
 - b) You may directly contact the Medicaid Grievance and Appeal (G&A) Manager, through: *Office of Health Care Advocate at (800) 917-7787*. The Global Commitment to Health (Vermont) <http://dvha.vermont.gov/appeals-and-fair-hearings> (*Attachment 3.D*)
- ❖ The Medicaid (G&A) Manager acknowledges the Appeal request, in writing, within 5 days of receipt of notification from program participant or representative
 - A file is opened in the State Grievance and Appeal database
 - ❖ The Medicaid (G&A) Manager provides a disposition *to* the Appeal, in writing, within 30 days (may be sooner if Expedited Appeal was requested)

Grievances and Appeals are recorded and submitted to Global Commitment to health Appeals and Grievances database.

<https://www.ahsnet.ahs.state.vt.us/GCAppeal/gcpword.cfm>

At any time you may revoke a Grievance or Appeal, orally or in writing.

If NFI does not respond within the timeframes stated in the Complaints, Grievance and Appeals procedure or you need further assistance, contact DMH (802) 241-0090

Types of Discharges/ Changes to Location

Planned / Anticipated Discharge is based on progress, attainment of goals, established reasons, client condition, and includes client/representative and staff, referring agency and/or any referrals made

Early Discharge is a planned discharge in response to an inappropriate placement to program. NFI VT must provide notice at a minimum of 30days to allow sufficient time to implement a discharge plan for the client and family to a more appropriate setting.

Emergency Discharge or Emergency Removal by NFI or by the State is based on the presence of an immediate danger of physical or psychological harm to self or others that conflict with the treatment needs of the child/youth to remain at NFI. In this case, program participant would need to be

- Screened by a Mental Health professional and determined in need of more intensive treatment setting
- Decision made as soon as possible, contingent upon avail appropriate housing

Respite is based on a planned break for parents/guardians, as supportive services for non-custody children/youth that are living in their own home/residence (biological, adoptive, kin-care)

Contact Us

NFI Vermont Inc.
Administrative Office- Main Number
(802) 658-0040
30 Airport Rd. S. Burlington VT 05403
www.nfivermont.org

The standard business hours for the Administrative office are M-F 8:30-4:30p.

Hours of operation, phone numbers and addresses for specific program sites will vary.

Please see program specific information and/or our website.

*Interpreter services may be provided by an external source, on a case-by-case basis.