

2025 Mental Health Advocacy Award  
Excellence in Leadership -Nomination  
Christie Everett, Clara Martin Center, Director of Operations  
January 8, 2025

I am honored to nominate Christie Everett, Director of Operations at the Clara Martin Center (CMC), a non-profit, designated community mental health agency, for the 2025 Excellence in Leadership Award for Vermont's Mental Health Advocacy Day.

Christie was the driving force behind Clara Martin Center applying for a federal SAMHSA grant for our Agency to become Vermont's first Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) grant recipient. In response to Christie's proposal, we were selected by SAMHSA in February 2021 for a two year, 3.87 million dollar demonstration grant. CMC has successfully completed this first CCBHC grant award.

In 2022, Christie also applied for a CCBHC extension grant which CMC was also awarded. This continuation grant allowed CMC to continue the important work started with the first CCBHC grant. This second grant award was for 4 years, at 1 million per year. The focus on this extension grant was on developing services and programs for Transition Age Youth (TAY) and Eldercare Services for aging Vermonters. We are in our 3rd year of the 4-year grant award period.

Throughout this process, Christie has been working with Vermont Care Partners system of agencies to support other designated agencies to apply for CCBHC expansion grants. She has provided education, guidance and technical support to many applicants and has assisted those that have been awarded these grants through learning collaboratives and consultation. To date, there are now 6 DA's with CCBHC grant awards from SAMHSA.

Parallel to all of this, Christie has worked with the Department of Mental Health and Department of Substance Use to support their progress to become a demonstration state. Clara Martin Center was selected to be one of the two organizations that helped the state with their application process. Since then, the state has become a demonstration state, and CMC was the first agency to be reviewed by DMH and DSU to be certified as a CCBHC by July 2025.

Christie has educated and advocated for CCBHC at all levels, including local, state, legislature and throughout the Vermont system of care. She is innovative, creative, and visionary in her thinking to improve and expand access to mental health and substance use care for all Vermonters. Christie has led our organization through a visionary leadership process to shift our existing paradigms to improve access to mental health and addictions treatment for Vermonters in our region. As one of Vermont's 10 Designated Agencies, we have struggled for years with chronic underfunding, that hampered our ability to recruit and retain the necessary skilled workforce. Under CCBHC, we have gained financial stability, and are able to offer more competitive wages, while bringing critical behavioral health and addictions access and treatment to even more Vermonters who need it. Our staff have also benefited from the increase in training resources to further develop our clinical services.

Christie was the first in Vermont to light the CCBHC torch, and Vermonters across the entire State have benefited from it. She is deserving of this award and recognition for her leadership efforts, which will transform and improve mental health and substance use services for all Vermonters. Christie's efforts to reform our system of care has a demonstrated impact on all the award criteria: Increase a sense of community or belonging; influences public policy; reduces stigma; overcomes barriers to services; and displays leadership. There is no one more worthy of an excellence in leadership award than Christie Everett. Thank you for your consideration of her nomination.

Sincerely,  
Melanie Gidney, CMC Executive Director