

NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

MEETING NOTES

September 10th, 2026

10:00 – 11:30am

Meeting Goal

Providing an opportunity for people and organizations across Northwest and Central Vermont to come together to share information, make connections, and explore opportunities related to prevention of substance misuse and promoting wellbeing in our communities.

Welcome & Agenda Overview

Agenda:

All Brains Belong: Intro to Neurodiversity Training, Dr. Mel Houser
Prevention Partner Updates
Backbone Updates
Wrap up/Next Steps

Intro to Neurodiversity

Everyone has different brains! Universal design is best practice
At least 1 in 5 brains learns, thinks, communicates differently than the majority of brains
One size fits all DOES not work for all, we all have access needs
“I don’t know what my access needs are. I just know that they’re not being met.”
Brain budget! Cognitive resources one starts with, spent differently depending on the person
Cognitive Fatigue: Demand > Capacity
The 9 senses! 5 that we know, also vestibular, interoception, proprioception, neuroception
Praxis: planning and seeking
Dyspraxia: difficulties with efficiency, affects 1/10

- Ideational
- Ideomotor
- Sequencing: Task Analysis, visual supports

Brain club! Free, but takes 5 steps, there is a visual support on how to do it
Weekly meeting Tuesdays at 6PM

Dopamine-bound brains need dopamine! They will churn through it faster, see resources in email
Interest-based vs importance-based nervous system, interest based – dopamine, hurry/urgency gives more dopamine, not procrastinating on purpose!

Nervous system regulation

- Not necessarily meaning being calm
- Parts of brain work together to complete tasks



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

- The Whole Brain Child – Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson
- Upstairs and downstairs brain
- Dysregulation
 - o Flight, flood, fatigue, fawn, fight, freeze
 - o Looks different on different people

Neuroinclusive environment: Breakdown → probe for unmet access needs

- o Conflicting access needs: talk about it!
- Normalizing access discussions
 - o Supervision
 - o Facilitation
 - o Shared vocabulary
- Neuroinclusive meetings/events
- New toolkit: universal design for neuroinclusive participation
 - o Healthcare
 - o Employee onboarding
 - o Meeting participation
 - o Universal Design webinar on 10/13

Neuroinclusive blog

Neurodiversity trainings

Kid and teen connections: virtual and open to everyone everywhere, 3-17yo

A Failure of Imagination, Dr. Mel Houser, preorders available

Questions

What do you do when people have conflicting access needs?

- Two different settings: when we know the people and when we don't
- Knowing the people: shared vocab which can be used and out in the open, paradigm shift
- Not knowing the people: not shared vocab, working really hard at it, community moderators and modifying community agreements,
 - o Ex. Using the chat in virtual meetings! Some people need to use it as a stimulant and will just put questions in there when they have them, but other people do not like it.
 - o Talk about how to disable the chat
- CAST: universal learning resource <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

Learn much more in this brand new toolkit: <https://allbrainsbelong.org/universal-design-events/>

Is dyspraxia a diagnoses? How do you learn if someone is dyspraxic?



NORTHWEST + CENTRAL VT PREVENTION NETWORK

-Yes. They can consider asking their primary care doctor for a referral to an occupational therapist. I make this diagnosis myself when I see it but a lot of PCPs do not have that familiarity.

Do you do a version of this presentation for teens/school groups?
-Contact Mel for more details!

Prevention Partner Updates

Jess Bickford: RPP work in Central Vermont with CVPC!! Happy to connect with anyone in Central VT. I'm still getting the lay of the land. jess.cvpc@gmail.com

Amy Boudreax: Essex CHIPS, great to meet you all

Christine Hughes: <https://richardkempcenter.org/>, Christine@richardkempcenter.org

Sally Russell: really close to advertising for a part-time position for YFM, working towards this goal for 3 years, looking for someone in the Barre area

Amy Boudreaux: position for a part time youth coordinator in the teen and tween center, [Youth Program Coordinator](#)

Backbone Updates

RFP open for new projects based on Primary Prevention! [FAQ document on the website](#)
Letters of Interest are due September 23rd and full applications would be due November 10 - please reach out to beth@unitedwaynwvt.org if you have any questions 😊 Existing subgrantees can submit for a new project or a significantly expanded project.
<https://preventionnetworknwvt.org/funding-subgrants/>

5th Annual Prevention Summit will be on **Thursday, October 15th at 40 IDX Drive** in South Burlington. Historically this is our one time to get together in-person every year to look at the work ahead, celebrate successes, and connect. [REGISTER HERE!](#)

Core Competencies from September 21-23 at 40 IDX Drive, [learn more and register here](#)

Wrap up/Next Steps

Next month's meeting is canceled due to the annual summit on October 15th

