



# Better Life

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Donna Jerry, Senior Health Policy Analyst  
Green Mountain Care Board  
144 State Street  
Monteplier, VT 05620

October 17th, 2022

**Re: Letter of Jurisdictional Determination**

Dear Donna,

Belonging Medical Group PLLC, is requesting a Jurisdictional Determination from the Green Mountain Care Board concerning the requirement of a Certificate of Need (CON). This letter will identify our requested expansion of proposed services as well as future possible projects.

**Belonging Medical Group**

Belonging Medical Group's mission is to help any underserved individual achieve a healthier life filled with belonging, love, and purpose. We partner with local organizations to provide harm reduction and integrated high-quality medical, behavioral health, and social care for adults across New England servicing Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Maine. We provide substance use disorder (SUD) treatment to include both Opiate Use Disorder (OUD) and Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) treatment, in a hybrid model combining both in-person and telehealth services. Our program includes medication-assisted treatment with medications such as Buprenorphine/Naloxone (Suboxone) with supportive group therapy by licensed professionals. We also offer, to our members, Virtual Responsive Care (VRC), which provides medical care and mental health services to all members in our substance use disorder treatment programs. We assess needs, provide basic medical care and referrals where appropriate, in coordination with the member's existing care teams elsewhere.

Our harm reduction treatment is tailored to each individual member and we offer comprehensive care that's easy to access, regardless of residency in any of the states that we serve. We make our physical and mental health services effective and affordable by partnering with local community organizations at their locations, where



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members are already at, to provide our group services. In addition to our SUD care we also provide mental health services. We work with our members to identify and treat symptoms of mental illness because we acknowledge that locating effective mental health care without judgment can often be a significant challenge to wellness. Mental health (MH) services are provided by psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, and counselors. All members are also supported by our larger Central Team who provide care coordination services.

### **Vermont Services**

We are currently serving approximately 500 Vermonters across the state without barriers or impediments. We offer opioid use disorder (OUD) and alcohol use disorder (AUD) medication-assisted treatment (MAT) within a group based model of care by licensed professionals (LADC, LICSW, LCMHC) living within the state. Members engage in weekly group counseling sessions, as required for prescription services, as well as on-demand 1:1 counseling sessions. Once monthly members engage in group sessions with their Medical Provider, with additional on-demand individual provider encounters offered upon request. Although the roots of our model are based in weekly group counseling sessions, we also offer a phased approach to treatment that includes weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly group engagements. We also offer Virtual Responsive Care to our VT members via on-demand or schedule 1:1 encounters with a medical provider. Currently all services, outside of the Vermont FLEX program (described below), are offered via telehealth. For our telehealth services we utilize either phone or Zoom platform.

### **Flex Program**

The Vermont FLEX program is a collaborative grant program between DSU, Vermont Cares, The AIDS Project of Southern Vermont, and Better Life Partners. Flex offers low barrier Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) treatment for the hardest to reach communities who use drugs (PWUD), grounded in the principles of harm reduction. We have increased access and engagement to treatment for individuals currently utilizing syringe service program (SSP) services from Vermont CARES and AIDS Project of Southern Vermont. This program is designed for individuals who require more flexible care models or for those whose goals are less clearly oriented toward not using substances. In this program, members drop into an onsite Syringe Service Program (SSP) location of their convenience or engage with a FLEX team member virtually or in the community.



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Members will receive 7-day prescriptions based on weekly engagement with a medical provider and/or RN and/or Counselor with the support of Recovery Coach services. We meet members either onsite at the SSP locations or via telehealth services to best support individuals moving from opioid harm reduction services to treatment for opioid use disorder. This project is solely funded by a grant provided by DSU.

## Proposed Project Services

Belonging Medical Group requests expanding our services to become an identified Spoke within the Vermont Blueprint for Health Hub & Spoke system. Our Spoke services will be phased into several Health Service Areas across the state. Our initial Spoke will be located in the Central Vermont Health Service Area where our Montpelier, Vermont Headquarters are located. We will maintain fidelity to our hybrid model which allows for both in-person and telehealth services, and will continue to function as providers with no intention to distribute MAT medications onsite. We plan to open our Montpelier office for in-person member services in conjunction with the telehealth services already being offered. The table below outlines services that will be available to our members.

Services Provided	Location	Level of Provider
Health Home Services	on-site/telehealth	Spoke RN & Spoke Counselor
1:1 Counseling	on-site/telehealth	LADC/LICSW/LCMHC
Group Counseling	on-site/telehealth	LADC/LICSW/LCMHC
Medication Assisted Therapy	on-site/telehealth	MD/NP
1 FTE RN & Counselor per 100 Members	on-site/telehealth	LADC/LICSW/LCMHC
1 FTE Medical Director & Per Diem NP	on-site/telehealth	MD/NP

## Possible Project

As well as the proposed project, we also wish to seek Jurisdictional opinion of any possible projects ahead of any Request for Proposals (RFP) for services issued by the



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Alcohol and Drug Use Program. We seek to fully be integrated into Vermont's system of SUD care by obtaining Preferred Provider status as a Certified Alcohol and Drug Use Program. At the time of the proposed RFP, we wish to move forward quickly, and would be subject to review. Preferred Provider status will allow us to fully integrate into Vermont's System of care as a reputable provider. It will also allow us to be financially sustainable while offering Vermonters a high quality standard of care. Preferred Provider status will also allow us to clinically supervise professional growth for LADC licensure. Currently, without this status, we are unable to hire and train those working towards licensure per the Office of Professional Regulation. We would love to support Vermont's diminishing SUD & MH workforce by providing training, guidance, and supervision to nurture those who desire professional growth.

We have also attached the required *Financial Data Form* to this letter.

On behalf of Belonging Medical Group's Leadership Team, we thank you in advance for your consideration.

**Dawn Taylor, MA, LADC, CS**

Pronouns: she/her

Vermont Clinical & Operations Director

[Better Life Partners](#)

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<b>Equipment Costs</b>	
<b>Name of Project:</b>	Spoke
<b>Name of Organization:</b>	Better Life Partners

	Latest Actuals	Year 1	Year 2	Applicable?
Equipment costs	\$-	\$-	\$-	Yes
Studies/Surveys Expense	-	-	-	No
Designs/Plans/Working Drawings	-	-	-	No
Installation Costs	-	-	-	No
Renovation/construction costs	-	-	-	No
Financing costs	-	-	-	No
Maintenance/service contracts	-	-	-	No
Other component costs	-	-	-	No
Lease costs	-	-	-	No
Equipment operating costs	590	590	590	Yes
Other (specify):	-	-	-	No
	-	-	-	No
	-	-	-	No
	-	-	-	No
<b>Less fair market trade-in</b>	-	-	-	No
<b>Total equipment Costs</b>	<b>\$ 589.57</b>	<b>\$ 589.57</b>	<b>\$ 589.57</b>	

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