

Background

In November 2022, the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) will begin a campaign to promote the web-based, interactive mental health resource [Man Therapy](#). Our goal is to improve access to mental health supports for working-aged men who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide— or other mental health challenges— but are hesitant to seek help. VDH will be piloting this resource in Rutland and Caledonia counties for one year to assess how well this resource engages with and supports Vermont men. This campaign is part of the [Facing Suicide VT](#) initiative, which includes a focus on improving mental wellness for Vermont populations at higher risk for suicide. See below for information about Man Therapy and how organizations can promote this resource.

What is Man Therapy?

Man Therapy is an interactive, web-based educational resource designed to show working-age men that talking about their problems, getting help, and fixing themselves is masculine. The campaign's strength is its innovative and humorous approach through a fictional "therapist" named Dr. Rich Mahogany. Dr. Mahogany is a no-nonsense man's man who lets men know honest talk about life's problems is how they will start to solve their problems. A central focus of the website is the ability to do a "head inspection" (self-assessment) and get "manly mental health tips." When men indicate a high level of distress, Dr. Mahogany refers them to national and Vermont mental health support resources.

Why Do We Need to Promote Resources for Vermont Men?

Working-aged men are the population least likely to seek or receive mental health support. In the U.S., working-aged men represent the largest number of suicide deaths. In Vermont, males account for 8 in 10 suicide deaths, and males die by suicide at a rate 4x higher than females. To support this underserved population, Vermont needs to implement additional strategies that reduce the stigma around seeking support.

Why is Vermont Piloting Man Therapy in Rutland and Caledonia Counties?

The Health Department is seeking to assess the effectiveness of Man Therapy in rural counties, like Rutland and Caledonia, because these counties are experiencing rates of suicide-related emergency department visits and deaths higher than the state average. In addition, Rutland and Caledonia counties both had towns with suicide deaths and attempts at or above the 90th percentile in 2021. While our focus is on the above counties, this resource is available statewide.

How can I Support the Promotion of Man Therapy in My Community?

Starting in November, the Health Department will begin supporting print and digital advertising in Rutland and Caledonia counties to raise awareness about Man Therapy resources and website. If your organization is interested in promoting men's mental health and participating in the Man Therapy campaign, please contact Nick Nichols nick.nichols@vermont.gov or check out the following pages for suggestions on promoting Man Therapy in your area. Our program can provide Man Therapy information, resources, 1:1 technical assistance, marketing materials, and more.

Men's Mental Health: How Communities and Programs Can Promote Man Therapy

Whether you are a coalition, community program, healthcare provider, public official, or just a concerned citizen, there many ways you can promote awareness of *Man Therapy* and encourage men in your area to check out and access these important resources. See below for some suggestions and resources for promoting Man Therapy.



Empower Local Influencers and Networks with Key Man Therapy Messages, Materials and Assets

- 1) Build a list of key community contacts and target audience points of contact.

Identify local social groups, Social Media accounts, spheres of influence, non-profits, organizations, events, and community locations where working-age men spend time. Put yourself in the shoes of the men you are trying to reach, where do they spend their time? E.g. Gyms, Bars, Restaurants, Sporting Events, Hardware stores, Barbers, Dentist, Post office, Gas Stations, Coffee Shops, Outdoor gear, Fly fishing shops, etc.

- 2) Develop and execute an email/call outreach and delivery campaign

Once you've identified as many possible outlets and community touchpoints as possible. Reach out to these organizations and groups to gain support and buy-in in the form of material use, display, and distribution in their communication channels. Provide each with downloaded digital assets, materials, and campaign messaging.

- 3) Create, sponsor, or plug into identified local events.

Are there community events you can create or be a part of where you can reach a large volume of men at once? What value can you add to the event by using the Man Therapy materials? Swag, posters, event banners, etc.

- 4) Inform and reach out to local elected and state officials

Leverage contacts and press releases to inform local elected officials like mayors, governors, and senators to gain support and buy-in. By leveraging their reach via social media or PR, one announcement from them can reach a large geographic population.

- 5) Reach out to local news outlets, media organizations, and public relations contacts

Pro-bono media can kickstart and fuel outreach in your area. Many times TV and Radio stations will run mental health PSA's if files and assets are provided. Reach out to local news, media, and press publications and outlets in your area to educate them on the Man Therapy campaign. If it's appropriate, don't forget to also share resources like *Reporting on Suicide* with your local news outlet (<https://reportingonsuicide.org/>).

Produce and distribute key printed materials, conduct community-based outreach to disseminate and install materials.

If a community or program has interest and resources available to reproduce printed materials, they may request free access to digital images, logos, posters, and content for reproduction and distribution by emailing Nick Nichols at nick.nichols@vermont.gov.



- 1) Identify which printed materials will resonate best with the male target audiences in your area.

The Department of Health recommends reviewing the available material and matching the specific targeted audience with a targeted message to improve campaign effectiveness and performance. For instance, using Veteran posters to deliver to local VA or VSO contacts and locations, you have the best chance of resonating with that audience. You know your local audiences best – based on your planned approach, what messages will resonate best? Based on the locations you have buy-in from or want to have an impact at, what materials and tactics would work best (posters, wallet card, coasters, t-shirts, stickers, etc.)?

- 2) Produce selected print materials.

Using a local vendor will likely stretch your budget further, but if you need production assistance reach out to us. Production-ready files can be easily accessed and delivered to local vendors for production. The Department of Health also has a limited availability of printed materials for distribution. **To request access to Man Therapy digital files or printed material, contact Nick Nichols at nick.nichols@vermont.gov.**

- 3) Deliver produced materials to key locations from identified list.

Based on the lists, contacts, and network you've developed, deliver produced materials to as many locations as possible. Start with smaller quantities and then refresh them with more materials as needed periodically.

- 4) Use team coalition to disseminate frequently and rapidly - prioritize installs and longer-term placements.

Leverage your existing team, networks, and contacts to distribute materials rapidly and widespread. What locations or opportunities provide the ability to install the produced materials on a more permanent basis? (Framed, protected, etc.).



Share Resources Directly with Service Users/Clients

If you are a program that provides services to men in your community, there are several ways you can share and promote these resources with the men who utilize your program.

1) Indirect sharing: Consider placing Man Therapy brand assets and materials (e.g. posters) in highly visible and trafficked areas to be found organically by clients and explored confidentially on their own. For example:

- Posting physical materials in high-traffic / male-specific areas: wallet cards, posters, swag, etc.
- Adding brand assets and URL links to digital communications (e.g. within email signatures of client-facing emails, content, and links on website, posting on social media)

We have a limited number of free posters and information cards available for community programs, as well as digital copies of many different materials for reproduction or sharing electronically.

2) Direct sharing: Share Man Therapy materials, either print or digital, and sending directly to staff and/or patients/clients:

- Sharing all materials and assets with staff to share with clients/patients
- Identifying key client/patient interaction points (i.e. check-in / check-out, follow-up / reminder e-mails etc.) where you can include content and links about Man Therapy
- Encouraging patients/clients to view or interact with a specific page or tool on the website when you are meeting with them (e.g. the 20-Point Head Inspection: <https://mantherapy.org/head-inspection/question>).
- Direct mail or email to patients as necessary with a basic explanation of Man Therapy and how it might be helpful

Sample Email for Direct Sharing to Patients/Clients/Service Recipients:

Dear _____,

I am reaching out today to share a new resource that may be of interest to you. Our organization is currently promoting a new mental health website that was developed specifically for men, and I think you may find some of the content helpful to support your own mental health and wellness. The website contains a large set of videos, tools, and tips for men who are interested in supporting their own mental health, including a confidential 20-Point “Head Inspection” that helps people identify specific ways to improve their mental health. Parts of the website are quite humorous and entertaining, but it also includes tools and supports to address a number of serious issues that men may be facing in their lives.

If you think you might be interested in learning more, please check out the site and consider taking the Head Inspection: [ManTherapy.org](https://mantherapy.org).

Please let me know if you have any questions.

For additional questions or requests for assistance, please contact Nick Nichols at nick.nichols@vermont.gov.

