



DULCE Family Specialist Profile

Lamoille Valley, VT

ABOUT LAMOILLE VALLEY

Clinic: Applesed Pediatrics

Early Childhood Agency:
Lamoille Family Center

Setting: Rural

Family Specialist:
Jenn Chittick

Family Specialists are the linchpin of the DULCE initiative, acting as a conduit between the family and the medical, legal, and early childhood systems. These profiles, one for each DULCE community, were produced from interviews with each Family Specialist. They are a celebration of the Family Specialists' dedication to and passion for supporting infants and their families and give some insight into their work. If you wish to learn more, please visit CSSP.org.

What's your favorite hobby or activity outside work?

I try my best to create a life I do not necessarily need a vacation from, and to be successful in doing this, I need to pay attention to the needs of my soul. During the spring, summer, and fall months, I am the happiest tooling around on my bicycle.

When don't want to face the elements, I enjoy losing myself to my art. I have an online business in which I make dolls using polymer clay. These dolls are fetal models that range in the ages of six to 24 weeks gestation, and they are used educationally and for families that have experienced prenatal and perinatal loss. I've been creating these pieces for 12 years and, to date, I have made over 1,000.

Why did you want to be a Family Specialist?

When I read the job description, I had an idea in my mind, a fantasy almost, of what it would be like. I was really intrigued. I knew Scott Johnson, Executive Director of the Lamoille Family Center, through previous employment, and so I called him and asked what the DULCE position was. He described it and it was exactly what I had in my head, which NEVER happens! I was going back to my roots—I started my career in human services seven years ago in Lamoille County and had done an internship at Lamoille Family Center, so I had lots of connections in the area. It felt like I was returning home.

In what ways do you see your work impact families?

My overall goal is to create a space and relationship where the family feels relaxed, supported, and can open up. It can be hard to have those difficult conversations, but when you feel supported, you are more apt to allow people into the scary parts of your world. It's really about the human connection. And it's beyond just the Family Specialist and families; it benefits the doctors and everybody else in the clinic. If I'm successful in engaging parents and establishing trust, then I've paved the way for that family to be more open with other providers and systems of care.

