

## Increase Reach Up Grants to Families

Children raised in poverty experience poor health and wellness outcomes in relationship to their higher-income peers. Current appropriations to the Reach Up program effectively ensure that this safety-net program meant “to improve the well-being of children by providing for their immediate basic needs” provides only 30%–50% of the income needed to achieve its purpose. The Alliance supports Voices for Vermont’s Children’s proposal to increase the Reach Up cash grant to children and families incrementally until it meets 100% of the basic needs of participants, with automatic inflation indexing going forward.



Reach Up grants to Vermont’s families living in extreme poverty provide only **37%** of the **Federal Poverty Level** income, which is itself insufficient to meet basic needs.

## Support Critical Investments through the State Budget

In 2019, early childhood programs will have to continue to advocate for needed funding increases, as there is no relief in sight to the prolonged trend of level funding social service programs. Budget allocations for these programs are critical not just to lower-income Vermonters but to the entire community. All Vermonters are impacted when these services cannot function well because of chronic under-funding. The Alliance will work with allies to oppose cuts to essential programs and direct services in the Human Services and other state budgets, and will actively investigate potential revenue sources in support of a state budget based on needs, not revenue limitations. The Alliance will continue to press for active discussions about tax reform and ending the level-funding cycle.

“The State budget should be designed to address the needs of the people of Vermont in a way that advances

**human dignity and equity.”**

—32 V.S.A. § 306a

## Strengthen Vermont’s Child Care Financial Assistance Program

CCFAP is a critical resource that helps Vermont families afford child care. However, the level of financial assistance offered by the program does not reflect the current cost of child care in Vermont, meaning the program no longer works as intended for families or child care providers. The Building Vermont’s Future Think Tank recommends that CCFAP provide the full cost of child care tuition for all families earning less than Vermont’s livable wage. The Alliance supports advocacy by Let’s Grow Kids, VT Association for the Education of Young Children, VT Child Care Providers Assoc., and Voices for VT’s Children to make immediate progress toward this goal by allocating additional funds to expand program eligibility, increase financial assistance for families, and increase the rates paid by the program to reflect current costs of child care.

Vermont families eligible for CCFAP may spend up to

**40%**

**of their gross income on child care**, even with financial assistance from the program, due to the current funding gap.

## Support and Build the Early Education Workforce

A prepared, professional, nurturing early childhood workforce is essential to the healthy development of our children, as well as supporting a robust Vermont economy. In order to respond to an urgent workforce demand and shore up the future of the state’s high-quality early care and learning system, Vermont must invest in early educators. The Alliance joins the VT Association for the Education of Young Children, VT Child Care Industry and Careers Council, and Let’s Grow Kids in supporting scholarships for early educators to attain necessary degrees and credentials through the T.E.A.C.H. program, and the establishment of a student loan repayment program for early educators in order to retain current teachers and attract new educators to the field.

Typical **cost of associate’s degree** at CCV:

**\$17,500**

(tuition and fees, before financial aid)

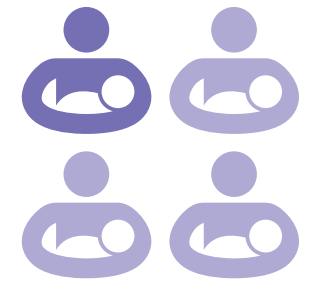
Typical **annual salary for child care worker** seeking a degree:

**\$26,440**

(\$12.71/hour)

## Create a Statewide Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program

Nearly every working Vermonter at some point will need to take time away from their job to care for or bond with a new child or to deal with a serious personal or family illness. A statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program will support the health, well-being, and economic security of Vermont’s children and families and ensure that future generations thrive. The Alliance supports the VT Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FaMLI) Coalition in advocating for passage of a strong bill in 2019.



**1 in 4**

new moms go **back to work** 10 days after childbirth.

The Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance is a statewide coalition of early childhood professionals, parents, organizations, businesses, and strategic partners committed to improving public policies that impact young children between birth and age eight in the areas of health, safety, food security, economic security, and early care and education.

In order to realize the promise of every Vermont child, families need to be supported and thriving, and children need to be nourished, safe, and engaged in quality early experiences.

In addition to crafting this annual Legislative Agenda in partnership with early childhood organizations, the Alliance provides year-round advocacy support, and facilitates meaningful discussions with policymakers at key times during the decision-making process.

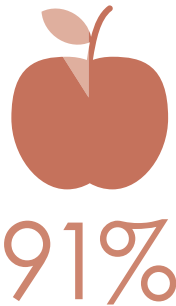
[vecaa.org](http://vecaa.org)

802-229-4281

a program of the  
Vermont Community Loan Fund

## Increase Access to Farm to School and Early Childhood Programming

Vermont Farm to School is a nationally recognized initiative that supports Vermont's economy, communities, and healthy development and learning for Vermont's children. In 2017, Act 63, the Farm to School bill, was signed into law allowing both registered and licensed child care providers to be eligible for Vermont Farm to School grants. The Alliance supports Vermont FEED, Hunger Free Vermont, and champion organizations in their efforts to fully fund Farm to School and Early Childhood at \$500,000. An increase of \$269,000 in state funds will ensure we reach this goal, and support early childhood programs and K-3 classrooms in accessing Farm to School and Early Childhood funding.



of early childhood providers polled indicated they are interested in implementing **Farm to Early Childhood** programming.

## Help End Child Homelessness by Investing In Housing and Services

All Vermonters deserve safe, stable and affordable housing, especially our children. We are making progress on homelessness, but need to increase state investments. The Alliance supports the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition in securing full, statutory funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), \$21.8 million for FY'20. The 2017 housing bond is making a real difference, but it doesn't make up for more than \$50 million VHCB lost over the last 20 years — and doesn't address the need for rental assistance and supportive services. Because of the state's chronic underfunding of housing needs, we must find new revenue sources dedicated to funding them, like the proposed \$2 motel/hotel occupancy fee.

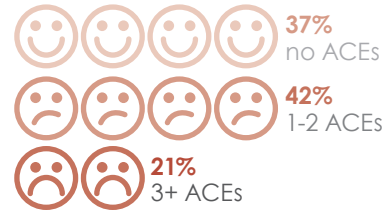


50 days

is the **average length of stay** in Vermont's homeless shelters — the highest level in more than 17 years.

## Increase Funding to Support Child and Family Resilience and Prevent ACEs

Children's Integrated Services (CIS) was designed to maximize children's health, development, and learning by providing individualized support to families and child care programs. Integrating services for children and families improves outcomes while reducing costs. Due to level funding since 2009, Vermont is coming up short in meeting its obligations to its youngest learners. The Alliance supports the work of the PCC Network, VT Family Network, and the Winston Prouty Center to secure increased funding to support CIS, which will allow the agencies delivering essential CIS services to meet increased demand for services that support resilient children and families and prevent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

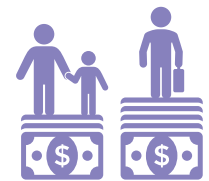


21%

of Vermont children have experienced 3 or more **Adverse Childhood Experiences**.

## Fully Fund Parent Child Centers' Master Grant

Parent Child Centers (PCCs) provide essential state services through grants and contracts with the state's Department for Children and Families. The Master Grant combines these funding sources and develops consistent measures and outcomes for the PCCs' work, and is base funding for the eight core services that PCCs deliver on behalf of the state. PCC funding has been stagnant for decades, while the workload and case complexity has increased. Therefore, PCC staff wages and benefits have suffered. The Alliance supports the PCC Network's request to incrementally increase state funding to the Master Grant by \$8 million (for a total of \$10 million per year) for the statewide network of 15 PCCs. Specifically, for FY'20, PCCs are asking for a \$1.5 million Master Grant increase (for a total of \$3.5 million statewide).



PCC staff wages and benefits are **30% below** market rates to comparable positions in education and state government.