

V E R M O N T
EARLY CHILDHOOD ALLIANCE

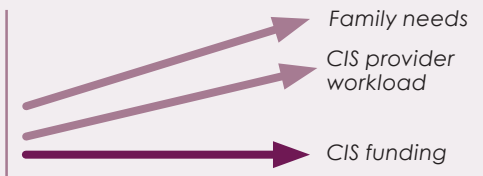
2017 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ *Strengthening integrated service delivery*

Sustain the Children's Integrated Services Result

Through Children's Integrated Services (CIS) home visits and early childhood program consultation, families and providers receive effective support and children make progress in their development. Changing population needs, increasing demands on the CIS workforce, and flat funding are eroding the promise of this initiative. The Alliance supports the work of Vermont Family Network and the Vermont Parent Child Center Network to sustain the CIS result by increasing Medicaid dollars and adding a General Fund investment in these proven early intervention and family support services.

While family needs and workforce demands rise, CIS funding has stayed flat—an effective reduction.



Upgrade the AHS Computer System

Many assistance programs that low-income Vermont families depend on like 3SquaresVT (food assistance) and LIHEAP (fuel assistance) are administered through a cumbersome, 35-year-old IT system. Because of this, the Agency for Human Services is unable to make simple improvements to programs and meet some federal requirements. The Alliance supports Hunger Free Vermont's efforts to ensure that the state invests in a new IT system that would ease administrative burdens, increase efficiencies, bring more federal dollars to our local economy, and lower barriers to accessing these crucial programs so that more Vermonters can meet their basic needs.

The current AHS computer system is
35 years old.

With a new system, Vermont families with children could get an estimated **\$2.9 million more** each year in federal food assistance while parents transition back into the workforce.





Increase CCFAP Funding

The Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) helps families access affordable, quality child care so that they can work and overcome life challenges. The program is underfunded, and the assistance available gives eligible families access to a fraction of the child care market. The Alliance supports the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children, the Vermont Child Care Providers Association, the Vermont Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and Let's Grow Kids in educating legislators about CCFAP, the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations for immediate action on CCFAP, and advancing proposals for incremental investments to increase families' access to high quality child care.

Current CCFAP payments are based on what programs charged to provide child care

in 2008.



These figures are now more than **eight years out of date.**

Increase Access to Afterschool/ Summer Learning

Quality afterschool and summer learning programs keep children safe, inspire learners, and help working families. The Alliance supports Vermont Afterschool's "Zap the Gap" campaign to create a state appropriation for the Expanded Learning Opportunities Special Fund, which if funded can provide grants to increase access to these programs, particularly for low-income children and families.



More than 21,000 Vermont children are enrolled in an afterschool program, but

22,000

are waiting for an available spot.

Expand the TEACH Program Pilot

Providers are reporting that with the full implementation of universal pre-kindergarten, as well as with new licensing regulations, Vermont is facing a serious shortage of available, qualified early childhood educators. TEACH Vermont addresses that shortage by providing scholarships, incentive bonuses, and support to non-traditional early education degree students. Without TEACH, many would have no affordable pathway to getting their degree. The Alliance supports VAEYC's work to expand on the currently over-subscribed TEACH Pilot Program so that it becomes permanent and includes a full continuum from associates to bachelors to licensure.

The TEACH Pilot Program is over-enrolled by





Help End Child Homelessness by Investing In Housing and Services

While Vermont is making headway on reducing child and family homelessness, to make real progress we need to increase State investments dramatically. The Alliance supports the work of the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition to secure full, statutory funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, estimated at \$20.4 million for FY '18. Further, we recommend that the State institute a \$2 occupancy fee on guests of motels and hotels and dedicate the projected \$11–\$12 million in revenues to additional State investments in affordable housing, rental assistance, and supportive services for homeless and at-risk families with children.

Homeless infants and toddlers and young children who experienced pre-natal homelessness are

41%

more likely to be in poor or fair health.



Increase Access to Farm to School for Early Care and Education Programs

Vermont's youngest children and their families need access to healthy foods, nutrition education, and community connections. Vermont Farm to School is a nationally recognized initiative which supports Vermont's economy, our communities and the healthy development and learning of our children. Unfortunately, 14% of Vermont children age 2–4 in the WIC program are obese and 26% of Vermont teens are overweight or obese, but the partners of the Farm to School Network provide educators with resources to reverse these trends. The Alliance supports efforts to pass the Farm to School bill which will allow both registered and licensed child care providers to take part in the state's Farm-to-School program.

1 in 7

Vermont children age 2–4 in the WIC program are obese.



Create a VT 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 and bond with a new child or to deal with a serious personal or family illness. A statewide paid family and medical leave insurance program for all working Vermonters will support the health, wellbeing, and economic security of our children, families, and small businesses and ensure that the next generation has a bright future. The Alliance supports the work of the Family Medical Leave Insurance (FaMLI) Coalition to develop a proposal for a statewide insurance program during the 2017 legislative session.

70.4%

of children under age 6 in Vermont have all parents in the labor force.





Evolving and transformative social change

Expand Coverage: Dr. Dynasaur 2.0

Over the last six years, health care costs have risen by more than \$300 million in Vermont — a barrier for most Vermonters to receive medical care when they need it. Dr. Dynasaur 2.0 proposes to expand Vermont’s existing and highly successful children’s health insurance program to all Vermonters from birth to age 26, regardless of family income. The Alliance supports the work of the Dr. Dynasaur 2.0 Coalition to develop a proposal for the expansion of the Dr. Dynasaur program during the 2017 legislative session.

Due to expensive premiums, high deductibles, rising costs and co-pays, more than



Vermonters are underinsured.

Respond to the Blue Ribbon Commission’s Recommendations

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High-Quality, Affordable Child Care was established to investigate and report on the elements and cost of high-quality child care in Vermont, addressing affordability, and evaluating possible financing options. Let’s Grow Kids will work with partner organizations, including the Alliance, to review the Commission’s recently released recommendations and leverage them to ensure the success of Vermont’s youngest children.

Every dollar spent on high-quality early care and learning programs yields a **\$4–\$9 return on investment.**

—Center for the Developing Child,
Harvard University

Pass FY '17/'18 State Budgets Based on Need

The Alliance will work with like-minded organizations to oppose cuts to essential programs and direct services in the Agency of Human Services budget, and will support a state budget based on needs, not revenue limitations.

Legislators will again be asked to cut

**\$50–\$70
million**

from the FY '18 budget, on top of similar cuts made in previous years.



INTEGRATION | CHILD CARE | HEALTH | CHANGE

VERMONT
EARLY CHILDHOOD ALLIANCE

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Community Loan Fund*

The Vermont Early Childhood Alliance is a statewide, independent, advocacy coalition of parents, community members, organizations, businesses, early childhood providers and strategic partners who are committed to improving public policies that impact young children between birth and age eight in the areas of health, safety, nutrition, economic security, and early care and education.