

V E R M O N T  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

## CRF Funding Summary

On Friday June 26, the Legislature approved three bills that allocated about \$600 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to provide emergency relief to Vermonters. The bills included a wide variety of provisions that will benefit the state's early childhood community.

A chart summarizing the bills can be found [here](#). The column marked "Senate" represents the final language. Note this chart also includes the proposals from the House and the Governor, which were not enacted into law.

The Alliance and our member organizations have been heavily involved in advocacy regarding the bills. If you would like more information about any of these issues, please follow the links below for the Lead Organizations that have been involved in each issue area.

For the complete text of the relevant bills:

- Final [version](#) of H. 965, which includes the human services, health care, and hazard pay provisions
- Final [version](#) of H. 966, which includes the business support and housing provisions

### **Child Care, Afterschool, Summer Camps**

#### **Parent Child Centers**

#### **Children's Integrated Services (IT supports)**

#### **[\$12m total]**

H. 965, p. 26-27

The House version of H. 965 included specific allocations for each of these three categories – \$6m for child care providers; \$3m for afterschool programs and summer camps; \$3.9m for Parent Child Centers; and \$100,000 for Children's Integrated Services (CIS) providers. After some discussion in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee of a possible *increase* of funding for the last two groups, the Senate Appropriations Committee instead decided to lump all these providers into one group, and *decrease* the amount of funds. The total agreed to was \$12m for all these groups, to be awarded by the Department for Children and Families (DCF) in an as-yet to be determined formula/process.

Note that the CIS funding is very specifically focused on costs related to telehealth and connectivity – "information technology training and the provision of equipment necessary for telehealth services" – not general operations. This focus is in keeping with a proposal offered by the Alliance's CIS working group, which created an "ask" that was specific and measurable based on the current CIS caseload and circumstances. Should a "surge" in caseload develop over the coming weeks, as is expected, Alliance members will return to the legislature with more a more general support "ask", and also seek to access the Health Care Stabilization Fund described below.

Also note that reporting on this section is slightly different than the general reporting provisions of the bill – DCF is required to report not later than August 18, 2020 to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare regarding how the funds are to be distributed across the various programs.

Lead Organizations: [Let's Grow Kids](#), [VtAEYC](#), [Parent Child Center Network](#), [VT Afterschool Alliance](#)

### **CIS general support [undetermined]**

H. 965 p. 16-17

While the House version of the bill provided very limited support for CIS (see above), the Senate added in language that allowed CIS to access more general program support. In the final version of the bill, CIS providers were made eligible to apply to the Health Care Provider Stabilization Grant Program, to which \$275m was allocated. The process for accessing that grant program is still to be determined, though the bill laid out a basic set of eligibility guidelines. It's also not entirely clear how the various parts of the CIS network would be considered by these guidelines.

The specific language provides eligibility to “organizations recognized by the Agency of Human Services through their status as provider grant recipients providing health support services, including ... organizations providing children’s integrated services.”

Note that individual health care providers that are CIS subcontractors are likely eligible to apply independently for support through this Grant Program.

Lead Organization: [Alliance](#)

### **Vulnerable Populations (including Reach Up) [\$2m total]**

H. 965, p. 27

While the House version of H. 965 contained \$300,000 allocated to support emergency grants to Reach Up participants, the final version followed the Senate’s lead in created larger pools of money that were to be accessed by multiple groups.

In this case, the bill as passed allocates a total of \$2m to be distributed by AHS, “as determined by a needs-based assessment”. The groups in this category include older Vermonters, individuals with a disability, and households living below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Specific uses for the funds include cleaning supplies and PPE, cash assistance to families with children under six years of age, internet access, and transportation-related expenses.

Lead Organization: [Voices for Vermont’s Children](#)

**Food Insecurity/Summer Meals [\$4.7m]**

H. 965, p. 23-25

H. 965 allocates \$4.7m to the Vermont Foodbank to distribute food and other necessities, and to provide subgrants to other organizations, like local food shelves, responding to COVID-19-related food insecurity issues. The Foodbank will also dedicate some of this funding to Vermonters Feeding Vermonters, to purchase necessary food directly from Vermont farmers.

While there are no new funds allocated to summer meals, H. 965 authorizes the Agency of Education to spend up to \$12m of CARES Act funds previously allocated for COVID related expenses to reimburse Summer Meal Sponsors for the cost of delivering summer meals. The Agency will report back to the legislature if more funds are needed.

Lead Organization: [Hunger Free Vermont](#), [Vermont Foodbank](#), [Vermont FEED](#), and others

**Diaper Need [\$50,000]**

H. 965, p. 23-24

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated diaper need in Vermont, as panic buying, job losses, and other economic pressures create more challenges for families. The Junior League of Champlain Valley (JLCV) Diaper Bank responded with a tenfold increase in its existing diaper distribution program, and expanded their partnerships to include local agencies around the state. The JLCV Diaper Bank requested a \$50,000 allocation of CRF funds to sustain these high diaper distribution levels through the end of the year.

The House version of the H. 965 allocated \$50,000 directly to the JLCV Diaper Bank. The Senate favored appropriating to organizations with existing grant relationships with the Administration. The final version of H. 965 increased the amount of funding initially proposed to go to the Vermont Foodbank to allow them to make a \$50,000 sub-grant to the JLCV Diaper Bank.

Lead Organization: [Junior League of Champlain Valley](#)

**Business supports [\$96m]**

H. 966, p. 5-13

H. 966 allocated \$96m to provide Emergency Economic Recovery grants to businesses that have suffered economic harm due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and economic crisis.

To be eligible for these grants, a business must show that they have experienced a 50% or greater loss in revenue in a one month period between March 1st, 2020 and August 31st, 2020. If a business files Rooms and Meals or Sales and Use taxes, any grant will be administered by the

Department of Taxes. If a business does not file Rooms and Meals or Sales and Use, any grant will be administered through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD).

The maximum grant amount is \$50,000, and each business or organization applicant may only receive one grant (including re-start grants, described above).

More information can be found at the ACCD [website](#).

Main Street Alliance-Vermont's summary of the Economic Recovery programs available in H.966 can be found [here](#).

Lead Organization: [Main Street Alliance VT](#)

### **Housing [\$85m]**

H. 966, p. 19-29

The legislature allocated \$85m in CRF funds to support Vermonters in obtaining or maintaining access to housing through a rental arrearage program, capital grants to housing and homelessness service providers, legal assistance, and other services.

Highlights include:

- \$25m in rental assistance and \$5m in foreclosure assistance, to stabilize renters and homeowners and prevent loss of housing due to evictions and foreclosures. The rental assistance funds can also pay for security deposits and first and last month's rent to help Vermonters without homes transition to permanent housing.
- \$250,000 to the Department of Housing and Community Development and \$550,000 to Vermont Legal Aid to provide legal assistance and other services to tenants, landlords, people at-risk of experiencing homelessness, and others financially impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.
- \$32m to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for capital grants to organizations providing housing, shelter, and other supports to people experiencing or at-risk of experiencing homelessness.
- \$16m to the Department of Children and Families to fund various programs that support individuals and families experiencing homelessness in accessing safe and stable housing.
- \$6.2m to the Department of Housing and Community Development for the Re-Housing Recovery Program, which will provide grants to housing providers to refurbish blighted and vacant rental properties into affordable units.

The legislature also made employees of homeless shelter and service providers and "provider[s] of necessities and services to vulnerable or disadvantaged populations" eligible for hazard pay grants to individuals working at jobs with increased exposure to COVID-19 (see below).

Lead Organization: [VT Affordable Housing Coalition](#)

### **Other provisions**

Note that this summary is intended to be narrowly focused on the elements of the bills that the early childhood community specifically tracked. There are many other elements of the bills that will support important work, including a focus on **health disparities** in different communities, **suicide prevention**, and providing support to other parts of Vermont's economy.

H. 965 allocates \$28m for a state "**hazard pay**" program. Child care providers are currently not eligible. However, if there is a change in the federal law that allows the use of CRF funds to provide hazard pay for workers who were at-risk but not in direct contact with provision of medical care (for example, grocery store workers), or if additional federal funds for hazard pay are made available, child care providers that worked with children of essential workers would be retroactively eligible for the state's hazard pay program. (p. 15-16)

Language in H. 965 related to the \$700,000 allocated to support **New Americans, refugees, and immigrant communities** permits (but does not require) some of that funding to support DCF's efforts to recruit and retain child care providers from within and serving those communities. (p. 29)

### **Reporting**

In most cases, AHS and other state agencies will make reports implementation of the provisions in H. 965 and H. 966 on or before August 15, 2020 and October 1, 2020 to the following legislative committees:

- House Health Care
- House Human Services
- House Commerce and Econ. Devt.
- House General/Housing/Mil. Affairs
- House Appropriations
- Senate Econ. Devt./Housing/Gen. Affairs
- Senate Health and Welfare
- Senate Appropriations

Note that the legislature is not scheduled to formally convene until August 25. However, it is expected that at least some of these committees will meet before then to hear/consider AHS' reports.

Final reports on CRF spending are due to the legislature on January 15, 2021.