

Children's Integrated Services: Stop the Historic Underfunding of CIS

THE ISSUE AND WHY IT MATTERS

CIS maximizes young children's health, development, and learning by providing individualized support to families and early care and education programs. These essential and federally mandated services are designed to lessen, if not eliminate, the need for future services that are costlier and less efficient. CIS has been shown to be effective in mitigating the effects of childhood trauma for thousands of Vermont families.

From when CIS began in 2009 until 2021, funding for the program remained flat, while the demand and actual costs to the 12 regional non-profit agencies that provide these services steadily increased. This led to a critical lack of capacity to serve children and families who struggle with multiple risk factors including increased child welfare involvement, increased exposure to parental opiate use, poverty, homelessness, and increased autism prevalence.

The Legislature began to address the shortfall last year, when for the first time the CIS budget was increased. But there is more work to be done. By fully funding CIS, the state of Vermont will save seven to ten times that amount as a return on investment by preventing the high cost consequences of childhood trauma in adults including incarceration, chronic medical conditions, substance abuse, and suicide.

ACTUAL COSTS FAR EXCEED PAYMENT

Several years ago, the Child Development Division (CDD) of the Department for Children and Families (DCF) paid consultants to study CIS reimbursement rates and make recommendations. The study revealed that actual cost of providing services was \$634 per client per month, far more than the statewide monthly rate of \$502 in the FY20 budget. Using the state's figures and factoring in inflation, full funding for FY23 would mean a case rate of about \$700.

FY23 BUDGET REQUEST – \$1.8m INCREASE

In FY22 state funding increases brought the monthly case rate up to \$600, with the current total annual CIS funding approximately \$11.5 million. An increase to a per member/per month (PMPM) rate to a level that covers actual cost of services requires a \$1.8 million increase in the annual CIS budget, to bring it to \$13.3 million.

In addition we propose using a one-time investment of federal pandemic relief funds of \$1,591,590 to build a statewide CIS data reporting platform using the Family Center of Washington County's successful Salesforce Community based data system.

About 20% of the funding comes from the General Fund, and the remaining 80% from Global Commitment funds.

ALLIANCE MEMBER/LEAD ORGANIZATIONS: Vermont Parent Child Center Network, the Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development, and Vermont Family Network.