

Increase Access to Safe, Stable, and Affordable Housing for all Children

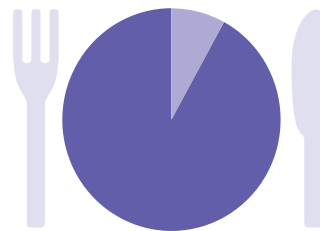
As a key social determinant of health, safe, stable, and affordable housing is essential to children's well-being and success. Housing instability, homelessness, and unsafe housing contribute to childhood trauma, risk, and negative outcomes. Increasing state investments in affordable housing, reducing homelessness, and improving the health and safety of rental housing are critical to improving children's outcomes. The Alliance supports the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition in securing full statutory funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board; promoting continued state investments in programs to reduce homelessness; ensuring that the Emergency/General Assistance Program continues to effectively serve Vermont children and families; and improving the health and safety of the state's rental housing stock.



Vermont has the **5th oldest housing stock in the nation**, with **30%** of homes built before 1939.

Make Universal School Meals Permanent

Every student should have access to the same things while at school, whether it's educational opportunities or food. As part of the federal response to the pandemic, students in Vermont have been able to eat school breakfast and lunch at no charge since March 2020. These measures are only temporary, and many students will lose access to the free meals they need next school year. Permanent universal school meals will mean that students will be more ready to learn, and school administrators will have more positive relationships with students' families. The Alliance supports Hunger Free Vermont's campaign to make universal school meals permanent, with costs not covered by federal funding to be paid for collectively through the Education Fund rather than in individual school budgets.



92% of Vermont parents surveyed say **universal school meals are helping their children.**

Transform Child Care

Vermont has never been closer to achieving an equitable, affordable, quality early childhood education system, but things have also never been harder for families or for Vermont's early childhood education work force. Across Vermont, programs are desperate to attract and retain early childhood educators in order to remain open, and families cite lack of child care as a key barrier to returning to work. Those families who do have access to child care often still struggle to afford it, and early childhood educators continue to be underpaid and undervalued. The Alliance supports the work of Let's Grow Kids and Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children to address these needs by continuing on the path laid by last year's child care bill, H.171, and responding to Vermont's urgent child care workforce crisis.



71% of Vermont **child care centers** are experiencing a **staffing shortage.**

Ending Child Poverty is Within Our Reach

Reach Up is tasked with improving children's well-being by providing for immediate basic needs. Partial funding has meant that the program has never met its objectives. We must do more to get families to the subsistence level of income, housing, health, and security by increasing Reach Up grants, and structuring the program to be restorative rather than punitive. The Alliance supports Voices for Vermont's Children in their request that the Legislature eliminates the "ratable reduction" that reduces the benefit by 50%; uses current cost of living to create a reasonable base grant; and prioritizes permanently affordable housing. We also support Voices' request for an inquiry into the use of surveillance and sanctions in the program.



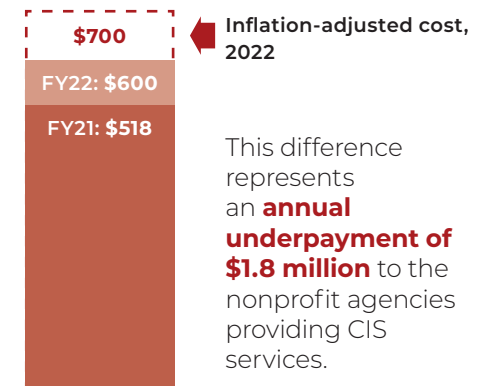
35%

of children between the ages of 0 and 8 in Vermont live in households that make **less than 200% of the federal poverty-level income.**

Fully Fund Essential CIS Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Children's Integrated Services (CIS) maximizes children's health, development, and learning by providing individualized support to families and specialized childcare programs. Due to inadequate funding over the last 11 years, Vermont is coming up short in meeting its obligation to its youngest learners, particularly those who are entitled to Early Intervention services mandated by Federal law. Children are unable to access early intervention and prevention services with the timeliness and frequency needed for good outcomes. The Alliance supports the lead organizations' efforts to secure an increased investment in CIS, which would ensure continued progress on optimal, healthy child development; family safety and stability; and, young children's access to quality early care and education.

Monthly CIS payment per child



The Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance

is a statewide coalition of early childhood professionals and providers, parents, organizations, and businesses working together to improve public policies that impact children and families in the areas of health, safety, food security, economic security, and early care and education.

The Alliance works with allies to support essential programs and direct services, and supports a state budget based on needs, not revenue limitations.

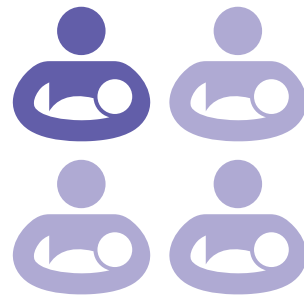
In addition to crafting this annual Legislative Agenda in partnership with early childhood organizations, the Alliance provides year-round advocacy support and facilitates meaningful discussions with policymakers at key times during the decision-making process.

vecaa.org
802-229-4281

a program of the
Vermont Community
Loan Fund

Universal Family and Medical Leave for All Workers

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. However, very few Vermonters have access to parental leave or personal medical leave through their employer. Federal and state laws allow certain eligible employees to take unpaid leave for these purposes, but many cannot afford to take leave when they need it. The Alliance will continue to support the Vermont Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FaMLI) Coalition in advocating for passage of a publicly overseen insurance program that creates universal paid medical and family leave for all workers and families in Vermont.

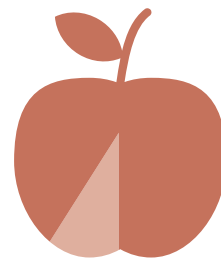


1 in 4

parents who give birth **go back to work only 10 days** after childbirth.

Increase Access to Farm to School and Early Childhood Programming

Vermont Farm to School is a nationally recognized initiative that supports children's healthy development and learning, along with Vermont's economy and communities. In 2017, Act 63, the Farm to School bill, was signed into law allowing both registered and licensed early childhood education 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. Full funding will ensure early childhood education programs and K-3 classrooms can access this critical programming.



91%

of Vermont early childhood educators polled are interested in **implementing Farm to Early Childhood** programming.

Ensure State Budget Funding for Critical Early Childhood Programs

This session the Governor and Legislature will be deciding what to do with hundreds of millions of dollars of uncommitted, one-time federal pandemic relief funding and one-time surplus state revenue. Together these present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest millions of dollars in state programs addressing Vermonters' health, safety, food security, economic security, and early care and education. The Alliance will work with our members and lead organizations to support expenditures of these funds to expand equitable, well-coordinated, and sustainable opportunities for children and families that are developed and governed with meaningful input from all who live here, and that support a vision of a state that works for every person living here, no one excluded.



Over \$500 million in federal relief funds awarded to Vermont **have yet to be allocated.**

Strengthen and Support Parent Child Centers

Parent Child Centers (PCCs) were established in Vermont statute in the late 1990s. Since that time, the PCC Network of providers has become more formalized and has worked to establish consistency and quality in service delivery for families across the state. However, state statute and state funding have not kept up with changes in the Network and the services that PCCs provide. The Alliance supports the PCC Network's effort to pass legislation to formalize statutes and establish clear accountability for PCCs as they deliver essential state services. In addition, the proposed legislation establishes a base funding amount for PCCs that gets closer to covering the actual cost of providing services, plus an annual increase to this base amount.



The number of **individuals served by PCCs statewide** in FY21 was 59,395: almost

20%

higher than the previous year due to the pandemic.