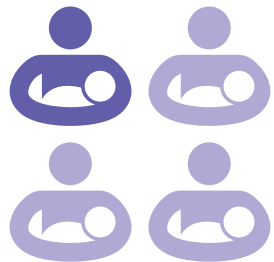


## Universal Paid Family and Medical Leave for All Workers

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.

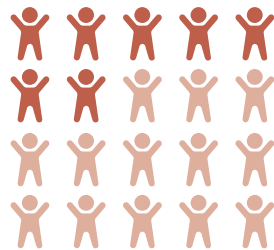


1 in 4

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

## Ending Child Poverty is Within Our Reach

Reach Up is tasked with improving children's well-being by providing for immediate basic needs, including food, housing, transportation, and clothing. Partial funding has meant that the program continues to fall short of its objectives. We must do more in order to create economic security for families and eliminate the experience of poverty and improve child well-being. The Alliance supports Voices for Vermont's Children in their request that the Legislature eliminates the "ratable reduction" that reduces the Reach Up benefit by about 50%; uses current cost of living to create a reasonable base grant; and prioritizes permanently affordable housing.



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.

## 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 and adverse developmental outcomes. Increasing state investments in affordable housing, reducing homelessness, and improving the health and safety of rental housing are critical to improving children's health and well-being. 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 prevent and reduce homelessness; improving the health and safety of the state's rental housing stock, and stability for renters; and ensuring the availability of General Assistance/emergency housing for Vermont children and families who are in need.



1 in 3

of Vermont households experiencing homelessness include children.

## Transforming Child Care

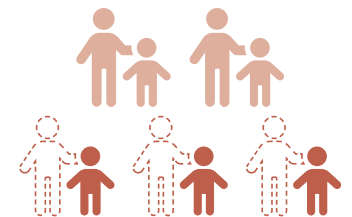
In the last legislative biennium, the Legislature passed historic legislation that set three goals for the state's child care system: that every child has access to quality child care; families spend no more than 10% of their income on child care; and early childhood educators are fairly compensated and well supported. Based on the work undertaken in the last biennium, in 2023 the Alliance supports the efforts of Let's Grow Kids and the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children in advocating for long-term funding to achieve five priorities that will be phased in over four years:

- **Affordability:** Transform Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program so that all Vermont families who need it receive support from the state to afford child care
- **Support for Early Childhood Educators:** Increase wages, benefits, and overall support
- **Governance:** Create a single, empowered leader in state government who is charged with overseeing Vermont's child care and early childhood education system
- **Accessibility:** Support the growth of Vermont's early childhood education workforce, increase capacity of programs, and ensure that all children have access to a program that best meets their needs
- **Equity:** Through specific programs to support families of color and other people marginalized by systemic inequities in Vermont, increased affordability, child care capacity development, and better support for early childhood educators and child care programs



86%

of Vermont child care centers are experiencing a staffing shortage.



3 in 5

of Vermont's youngest children do not have access to the care they need.

## 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 between birth and age eight 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 policy-makers at key times during the decision-making process.

[vecaa.org](http://vecaa.org)  
802-229-4281

a program of the  
Vermont Community  
Loan Fund

## Protect Family Access to Integrated Support Through CIS

Children's Integrated Services (CIS) delivers evidence-based and informed services to families with young children as part of a coordinated continuum of care across multiple types of providers and settings. Thanks to state funding increases over the last two years, the case rate paid to providers is now closer to the actual cost of services. However, CIS referrals are currently increasing statewide, which is creating CIS program budget deficits for both FY23 and FY24. The Alliance supports the lead organizations' efforts to secure an increased investment in CIS to support increased demand. In addition, the Alliance supports the proposed one-time investment to build a statewide CIS data reporting platform.



Historic underfunding of and increased demands for CIS has resulted in **delayed service delivery, staffing shortages, and inadequate capacity to serve the needs of young children and families.**

## Confirm the Education Fund as the Permanent Funding Source for Universal School Meals

From March 2020 to June 2022, the federal government made Universal School Meals available to all children in Vermont and around the country as part of their pandemic response. These past three years of Universal School Meals has proven the benefits of the program for students, families, schools, and staff. The federal waivers making this possible expired in the summer of 2022. Anticipating this, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed Act 151, indicating their commitment to continuing to make Universal School Meals available to all Vermont children. The Alliance supports Hunger Free Vermont's plan for ensuring that all public schools will be able to permanently provide meals for all children with the cost paid for by the Education Fund.

Universal School Meals lead to:

- ✓ **improved student learning and health**
- ✓ **strong local farms**
- ✓ **elimination of stigma and lunch shaming**

## Fully Fund Vermont's 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. PCC base funding was increased last year, but funding levels do not cover the actual cost of providing services. The Alliance supports the PCC Network's effort to secure base funding for PCCs of \$10 million, up from the current \$4.8 million, to cover the actual cost of providing services and address decades of underfunding.



Over

90%

of parents receiving supports from Parent Child Centers when surveyed reported that **they got the help they needed**, and that they feel **stronger and more confident as parents.**

## A Sustainable Statewide Solution for Diaper Need

The Junior League of Champlain Valley (JLCV) founded their entirely volunteer-run diaper bank in 2018 to provide diapers to low-income Vermont families in Chittenden County. Five years later, the program is now statewide and increased demands have outpaced the organization's ability to administer and organize it effectively. The Alliance supports JLCV's efforts to secure ongoing funding of \$380,000 to support a long-term Vermont Diaper Bank that will work with the existing network of community partners to secure and distribute diapers to low-income Vermont families and alleviate diaper need in the state.



1 in 3

Vermont families receiving WIC report **experiencing diaper need.**