

Build on Our Child Care Progress

For many years, child care champions from across Vermont have worked to change the trajectory of our state by building an accessible, affordable, quality child care system. In the first year since Act 76, the new child care bill, was passed, new public investment has lowered child care costs for thousands of families, increased compensation for early childhood educators, and allowed new programs to open and existing programs to expand. The Alliance supports the work of Let's Grow Kids and the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children to build on our child care progress by sustaining funding for Act 76, making child care more affordable for families, and strengthening the early childhood education workforce.



Since Act 76 began rolling out, public investment in Vermont's child care system has created over

1,000
new child care spaces.

Fully Fund Reach Up to End Child Poverty

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, 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 base Reach Up grant that is adequate; and prioritizes making permanently affordable housing accessible.



The Reach Up benefit for a family of three is just

\$880
per month, far short of covering basic needs.

Support the Building Bright Futures Network

Building Bright Futures (BBF) is named in state statute as the entity charged with advising the Legislature, Governor, and Administration on the well-being of young children and their families. BBF's role has increased in recent years, including being named responsible for monitoring Act 76. The Alliance supports BBF's request for an additional \$322,445 in base funding in FY26 to support monitoring, accountability, building state and legislative capacity, and advisement. This additional funding is necessary to support personnel, overhead, and program expenses that will enable BBF to provide timely direct advisement on policy and program implementation based on the most up-to-date data and monitoring efforts.



BBF advised the Legislature and decision-makers more than

150 times
during the 2023-24 biennium.

Support the PCC Network to Reduce Tobacco Use and Exposure

Leveraging funding from Tobacco Settlement Funds will enable Vermont's 15 Parent Child Centers (PCCs) to deliver effective smoking and vaping prevention and cessation activities, and keep young children safe from secondhand smoke exposure. PCCs are in a unique and strategic position to reach pregnant and parenting families and young children at a time when health risks from exposure are highest. The Alliance supports the VPCCN's request to allocate \$500,000 from these funds to provide screening, cessation program referrals, education, and prevention activities to support parents to stop smoking and vaping and maintain smoke-free homes to protect the youngest Vermonters.



Vermont has the **5th highest rate of tobacco use during pregnancy** in the U.S. **13% of all births** in 2023 were affected.

Address Vermont's Homelessness Crisis

Vermont has one of the highest rates of unhoused people in the country. The underlying cause of Vermont's homelessness crisis is the severe shortage of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes and a widening gap between incomes and housing costs. The Alliance supports the Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont in its request for the Legislature to: 1) maximize the capacity of Vermont's affordable housing developers; 2) maintain Vermont's existing homelessness prevention infrastructure; and 3) ensure emergency shelter is available for unhoused Vermonters.



According to the 2024 Point In Time count, there were

3,458
unhoused Vermonters on a single night, including **737 children.**

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. Unfortunately, recent state investments have not substantially improved the ability of community-based agencies to retain staff and provide services, even as demand has remained higher than pre-pandemic levels. The actual costs to provide care are 14% higher than current reimbursement rates. The Alliance supports advocates' efforts to secure a \$1.6m increase to allow for full funding of the true cost of care; an annual study to determine appropriate rates; and full funding for the development of CIS data management modules.



The CIS program supports almost **1,600** VT families each month.

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
802-229-4281

A program of the Vermont Community Loan Fund

Ensure a Strong, Adequately Funded Vermont 211

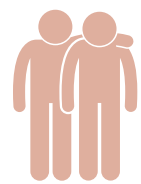
For many years, nonprofit service providers throughout Vermont have promoted and relied upon Vermont 211 as the one phone number to remember, and as the reliable, trusted place where someone will always answer and help people connect with services and referrals. Vermont 211 is supported in large part by state funding through the Department of Children and Families. The Alliance supports the United Ways of Vermont's efforts to secure full base funding of \$1.6 million for Vermont 211 in FY26 to maintain current operations and provide full-time staffing. This funding would support operations and staffing without the need for and the instability of supplemental funding.



Vermont 211 received **50,157** contacts via calls and text in FY23, resulting in **23,792** referrals for benefits and services.

Strengthen Peer Support for Pregnancy and Infant Loss

There is a clear gap in the system of care for families who experience pregnancy and infant loss. About 1 in 4 pregnancies end in loss, yet historically accessible support is inadequate. Parents facing perinatal loss are at much greater risk for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders compared to non-bereaved parents. Empty Arms is the only statewide organization that provides free peer support for perinatal loss. The Alliance supports Empty Arms' effort to secure \$40,000 for two years (\$80,000 total) in state funding to strengthen internal capacity and scale up programs.



Bereaved birthing parents have **4x greater odds of major depression** and **7x greater odds of post-traumatic stress disorder** than non-bereaved birthing parents.

Build a Vermont that Works for Everyone

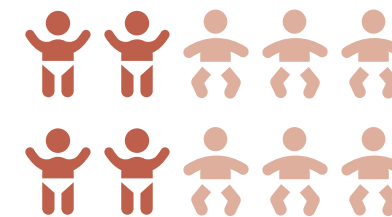
The Administration and Legislature currently focus on revenue projections when building state budgets, instead of the needs of Vermont residents. As a result, state programs and services in Vermont are chronically underfunded. At the same time, wealth and income inequality has grown, resulting in a population of wealthy Vermonters who are able to pay significantly more in taxes than they currently are. The Alliance continues to support the Fair Share for Vermont Campaign's proposal to increase the personal income tax rate on marginal income over \$500,000, generating over \$74 million annually to improve public goods and services.



The Fair Share for Vermont Campaign's proposal will **increase taxes on marginal income over \$500,000** by 3%, which will affect the top 1% of Vermont taxpayers and **raise over \$74 million annually** in state revenue.

Medicaid Coverage for Community Doula Care

Doula support is an evidence-based policy that promotes more equitable, safer, less expensive births, and improves perinatal outcomes in the short-and long-term. Doula care is also correlated with improved infant-parent bonding and less postpartum depression and anxiety throughout the perinatal period. The Alliance supports the efforts of the Doula Association of Vermont to secure policy changes that will enable Vermont families covered by Medicaid to access the support of a community doula, who can provide care and advocacy during the perinatal period that meets the self-determined needs of the birthing person.



About **40%** of all births in Vermont are covered under Medicaid.

Increase Family Financial Stability

Vermont's Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) help families with the fewest resources fill the gap between income and expenses by providing cash when they file their taxes. Vermont has been a leader in state-level anti-poverty tax credits, but too many families still fall short of their basic needs. Restrictions and barriers to access leave out many Vermont families who would benefit from the credits. The Alliance supports the Anti-Poverty Tax Credit Coalition's efforts to expand Vermont's EITC from matching 38% of the federal EITC for families with children to 55%, and to improve access to the Vermont EITC and CTC for families with low income who need them the most.

Increasing Vermont's Earned Income Tax Credit **would help**

20,000 families with children close the gap between their earnings and what they need to make ends meet.

