

Deliver on the Promise: Act 76 Implementation

The historic 2023 Child Care Bill (Act 76) includes long-term, sustainable public funding that will make a lasting difference for young children, their families and early childhood educators, and for businesses and our state's economy. The bill will invest \$125 million annually to help families afford care, and support child care programs as they improve quality and early childhood educator recruitment and retention by increasing compensation, resources, and professional training. The Alliance supports LGK and VTAEYC in their work to monitor implementation of Act 76 with the goal of making it work for all Vermont families, and to ensure that funding gets into the hands of those who need it most.



Vermont will see **\$125 million** in **new investments every year into its child care system** through Act 76.

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, 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.



On average, over **3,700** Vermont children aged 9 and under were in households enrolled in **Reach Up** in federal FY22.

Support the Parent Child Center Network

The members of the Vermont Parent Child Center Network (PCCN) are currently implementing changes required by an update made to their enabling state statute, which formalized their structure and partnership with the State of Vermont. The changes have brought additional administrative needs as PCCN continues this transition. PCCs have also seen significant increases in health insurance costs for their staff. The Alliance supports PCCN's effort to secure a base funding increase for PCCs of \$865,000 to cover additional administrative costs, increased personnel costs, and move closer to the actual cost of providing services and avoid a reduction in service levels to our communities.



94% of parents receiving supports from Parent Child Centers reported feeling **stronger and more confident as parents** after working with a PCC.

Paid Leave Improves the Health and Well-Being of Vermont Families

At some point in their lives, everyone will need to take time away from work to care for themselves or a loved one. Our communities are stronger when Vermont families and businesses can count on paid leave. Paid leave programs increase workforce participation, support healthy and bonded families, and reduce poverty. With paid leave, family caregivers are supported, their loved ones can remain at home where they want to be, and growing families have a strong start. The Alliance will continue to support the Vermont Paid Leave Coalition in advocating for the strong paid medical and family leave program Vermonters need.



An estimated **73%** of working Vermonters **do not have access to paid family and medical leave.**

Ensure Access to Safe and Affordable Housing

The pandemic and the '23 flooding illuminated and exacerbated the challenges too many Vermonters face finding and maintaining affordable housing. The crisis is of particular concern for families with young children who are at risk for and are currently experiencing homelessness. Currently, 1,273 households rely on state emergency housing programs (the Pandemic Era Hotel/Motel Transition Program and the traditional General Assistance Emergency Housing Program). At least 196 of these households are families with children. The Hotel/Motel Program is set to end in April, leaving the outdated and more limited General Assistance Program as the only emergency housing option when shelter beds are not available, which will result in many Vermont households without shelter. The Alliance supports the Housing & Homelessness Alliance of Vermont in its request for the Legislature to:

- Make \$160 million in housing capital available for affordable housing and shelter development and preservation
- Provide full statutory funding of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board through the Property Transfer Tax
- Re-envision the state-run emergency housing system
- Ensure adequate funding for General Assistance emergency housing and households remaining after the end of the Hotel/Motel program (the June Cohort) while any programmatic changes are implemented
- Adequately fund the state programs that provide support and services for households in temporary and permanent housing, with particular attention to housing stability and retention services designed to increase sustainability and prevent homelessness for Vermont families.



Vermont counties have a **rental housing vacancy rate of**

0.5%-3% which is far below the ideal rate of 5%.

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 an Accessible and Strong Vermont 211 Information and Referral System

For many years, nonprofit service providers throughout Vermont have promoted and relied upon Vermont 211 as the one phone number to remember, 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 program has been level-funded for many years even as the actual cost of running the program has grown significantly. The Alliance supports the allocation of base state funding in FY25 for the Vermont 211 Information and Referral System that allows for full-time service, maintenance of information databases, and capacity to assist the state and municipalities in times of disaster and emergencies.



Vermont 211 received

49,126

contacts by phone and text in 2022.

Strengthen Peer Support for Pregnancy and Infant Loss

There is a clear gap of support for perinatal loss in Vermont. These events include when a baby has died in pregnancy through the first year of infancy. Parents facing perinatal loss are at much greater risk for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders compared to non-bereaved parents. Empty Arms Vermont provides peer support for any family in Vermont facing pregnancy or infant loss. The Alliance supports the Empty Arms effort to secure state funding to hire a part-time Executive Director and part-time Development Coordinator so that the organization has the personnel resources and time to strengthen its programs and develop a long-term plan for sustainable funding.



Bereaved birthing parents have

4X

greater odds of major depression and seven times greater odds of post-traumatic stress disorder

than non-bereaved birthing parents.

Increase Revenue to 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 of this focus, state programs and services are chronically underfunded. Even as demonstrated needs are increasing, there has been no adjustment to Vermont's personal income tax rates for years. The Alliance supports Fund Vermont's Future's "Fair Share for Vermont" Proposal to increase the income tax rate for Vermont taxpayers earning more than \$500,000, generating about \$100 million to improve public goods and services and demonstrate that raising revenue is possible, paving the way for a future for all Vermonters based on abundance and prosperity.

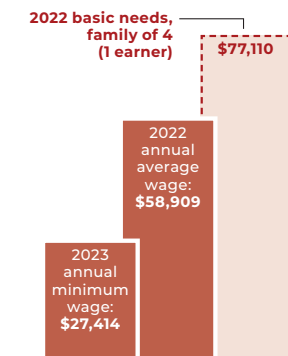


The "Fair Share for Vermont" proposal will create a **3% surcharge on annual personal income over \$500,000**, which will generate

\$98 million in state revenue each year.

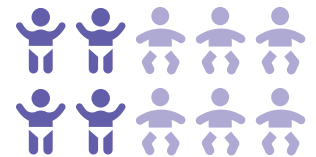
Expand Vermont Tax Credits to Help Vermonters Meet Their Basic Needs

Over 10 percent of Vermont families with children live in poverty, more than three times the percentage of families without children. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) help qualifying families fill in some of the gap between incomes and expenses by providing cash when they file their taxes. Restrictions on who qualifies, as well as systemic barriers to access, leave out many Vermont families who could benefit. The Alliance supports the efforts of the EITC/CTC Coalition, led by Public Assets Institute, to expand the Vermont EITC to 55% of the federal EITC, and to expand access to the Vermont EITC and CTC for families with low income who need them most.



Medicaid Coverage for Community Doula Care

Doula support is an evidence-based policy with short- and long-term impacts. Providing more access to doulas 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 Vermont Doula Access Coalition 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.