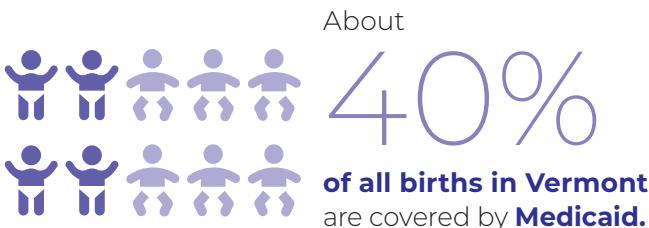


Planning for Doula Coverage for Medicaid Births

Vermont enacted legislation last session to begin the process of enabling Vermont families covered by Medicaid to have access to doula services, which improve outcomes for babies and their families, strengthen infant-parent bonding, and increase equity in our community. Act 50 instructs the Office of Professional Regulation (OPR) to create a voluntary certification process for community-based perinatal doulas and requires the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) to begin the process of making a request to the federal government to include doula services in the State Medicaid Plan. The Alliance supports the efforts of the Doula Association of Vermont to ensure that OPR and DVHA implement Act 50 as directed by the Legislature.



Build a Vermont that Works for Everyone

The State of Vermont does not raise sufficient revenue to meet Vermonters' needs, resulting in chronic underfunding of state programs and services. This underfunding will be exacerbated by recent federal actions that cut funding for Vermont while giving massive federal tax cuts to the state's wealthiest residents, further reducing the State's ability to ensure that all people have the basic resources and support that they need to thrive. The Alliance supports Fair Share for Vermont's proposals to increase taxes on the wealthiest Vermonters through income tax surcharges and other measures to fund public goods and services and to better insulate the state from federal actions.

The **top 1% of Vermont income-earners** are set to receive an **annual tax cut of**

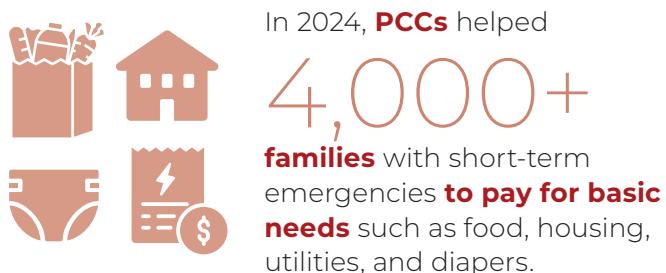
\$57,000

on average, as a result of HR.1 that passed in July.



PCCs Support Families in Uncertain Times

The 15 Parent Child Centers (PCCs) are a critical part of Vermont's system of care for young children and families. PCCs core services promote healthy development, prevent maltreatment, and support family stability. When families cannot meet their basic needs, it is much more difficult to provide the attention and nurturing that children need to thrive and is crucial in the first few years of brain development. The Alliance supports the Vermont PCC Network's request for a funding increase of \$1.88 million to help families access basic safety net programs, provide concrete services to meet immediate needs, and to ensure PCCs have staff capacity to serve families who need support.



Protect Access to Emergency Shelter

Homelessness represents one of Vermont's key barriers to early childhood health, safety, food security, and education. But despite this reality, significant cuts to our GA emergency housing and statewide shelter system have driven a rise in unsheltered homelessness by approximately 63% over the last year. The Alliance supports efforts led by the ACLU of Vermont to reduce or eliminate unsheltered homelessness by preserving and expanding access to the GA emergency housing program for Vermont individuals and families experiencing homelessness. At a minimum, advocates seek to retain funding equal to FY26 Budget one-time and base appropriations of about \$39 million.

According to the 2025 Vermont State of Homelessness Report, **more than**

1,000

children are experiencing homelessness in our state.



Fund the CIS System and SAG

Children's Integrated Services (CIS) coordinates care and service delivery in Early Intervention, specialized child care, early childhood and family mental health, and home visiting to provide better outcomes to children and young families. Under-resourced community-based agencies that provide CIS services struggle to retain over-worked staff and meet patient needs. Federal funding of an expanded Special Accommodations Grant (SAG) program has been fully utilized to support the system and providers, but has now run out. The Alliance supports efforts to secure an FY27 Budget increase of about \$1.8 million to fund the true cost of CIS care, permanent funding of at least \$3 million for SAG, and development of CIS database software.



The **actual costs of delivering CIS are at least**

12%

higher than the current state reimbursement rate.

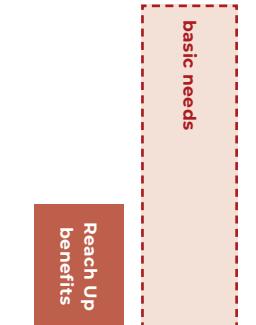
Ending Child Poverty is a Policy Choice

Reach Up is tasked with improving children's well-being by providing for immediate basic needs, including food, housing, transportation, and clothing. Persistent underfunding of Reach Up and outdated eligibility guidelines keep thousands of Vermont's children experiencing hardship known to be harmful to their health and development. An enrolled parent working to overcome barriers to employment, with two children, receives less than 40% of what the Department for Children and Families has set as a subsistence-level budget. The Alliance supports Voices for Vermont's Children in their request that the Legislature fully fund Reach Up and eliminate the arbitrary asset limit to simplify eligibility.

The **maximum Reach Up benefit for a family of three is just**

\$880

per month, less than 40% of what is needed to cover basic needs and housing.



Ensure Vermont 211 is Strong and Sustainable

For years, Vermont 211 has been promoted as the trusted, single number connecting residents to essential services and disaster support. Like many human services organizations across the state, Vermont 211 is facing staff recruitment and retention challenges. To ensure the ongoing sustainability of Vermont 211, adequate funding is needed to support staff and operations and investment in innovations to ensure that Vermont 211 can best serve the community's emergency services and health-related social needs. The Alliance supports the United Ways of Vermont's request for adequate investment to ensure that Vermont 211 can continue to provide consistent, high-quality support to Vermonters in need.



In 2024, **VT 211 received**

57,375

calls and texts, resulting in **22,008 referrals** for benefits and services.

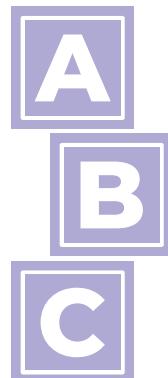
Build on Our Child Care Progress

Vermont is in the midst of child care transformation. Public investment in child care is working by increasing the number of slots and overall affordability, but we know the work isn't done. Families are still spending too much on child care, programs need more staff, and businesses rely on a strong workforce to succeed. The Alliance supports Let's Grow Kids Action Network and the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children in their efforts to protect all child care funding in the state budget, continue increasing access and affordability for children and families, and strengthen the early childhood education workforce.

Child care tuition assistance enrollment has increased by **63%** **over the last two years**, meaning **nearly**

5,000

additional children and their families have gained access to reduced child care costs.



Close the AOE Background Check Loophole

The Vermont law which requires schools to conduct background checks on employees does not extend to individuals hired by the Agency of Education who enter schools, including those contracting with the Agency. Addressing this compliance gap will strengthen Vermont's broader efforts to reduce child maltreatment, create safer, more equitable learning environments, and build family trust in school environments. The Alliance supports Prevent Child Abuse Vermont's efforts to amend state law to require background checks for all Agency of Education employees and contractors who enter schools. This update will ensure every adult who interacts with students in Vermont schools meets the same child safety requirements.



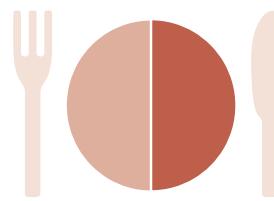
In 2024 there were
over 150
Agency of Education contractors
who were **not subject to**
background check requirements
under current statute.

Improve CACFP & Food Access in ECE Settings

Under federal program guidelines, a family child care home can only participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) if they have an agreement with an eligible sponsoring organization. Due to financial restraints, many sponsoring organizations have been forced to drop the program. The three remaining organizations are facing critical financial challenges that limit their ability to continue operating as CACFP sponsors. The Alliance supports Hunger Free Vermont's request for \$182,000 in base funding in the FY27 Budget for Vermont's CACFP sponsor organizations so that they can continue to operate, more child care providers can participate in CACFP, and more young children can have access to nutritious meals.

Only

50%
of family child care homes
in Vermont participate in
CACFP.



Streamline and Modernize Background Checks for Early Childhood and Afterschool Educators

Early childhood and afterschool programs across Vermont face an average delay of seven weeks in fingerprinting and background check processing, preventing timely hiring and limiting access for working families. These administrative bottlenecks restrict program capacity, leave Act 76 funds underutilized, and undermine the stability of Vermont's child care workforce. The Alliance supports efforts by advocates to modernize state systems and fund IT infrastructure to reduce processing times, help programs hire more staff, expand enrollment, and strengthen early learning opportunities for children in Vermont.



It currently takes about
7 weeks
(35 business days) for
the state to **process**
background checks.

Establish Early Childhood Education as a Profession

The 6,500 early childhood educators working in Vermont's non-public school child care programs serve the majority of Vermont children in child care, but lack a system of individual regulation that aligns qualifications, accountability, and career pathways. The ECE Profession Bill would license non-AOE-licensed early childhood educators through the Office of Professional Regulation. Professional recognition for early childhood educators protects the public, supports children, and strengthens the early childhood education workforce with clear career pathways and by connecting qualifications to compensation and accountability. The Alliance supports the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC) in their efforts to pass the ECE Profession Bill, including an appropriation of \$1.4 million to OPR to support licensure.

There are more than

6,500
early childhood educators
working in non-public child
care settings across the state.



Ensure 3SquaresVT Access for Vermont Families

SNAP, known in Vermont as 3SquaresVT, is a federal nutrition program that provides monthly funds to low-income people to buy groceries. Vermont must pay more of the cost of administering 3SquaresVT beginning October 1, 2026 because of new federal policy. This change is estimated to cost \$8.4 million each year, or about \$6.3 million in the FY27 budget. Without adequate state funding, Vermont will struggle to keep 3SquaresVT operating at its current level, putting food security and health outcomes for families with young children at risk. The Alliance supports Hunger Free Vermont's request for the Legislature to fully fund these increased administrative costs so 3SquaresVT remains available, accessible, and dependable for Vermonters.



\$6.3 million

in additional funds are needed to administer 3SquaresVT for FY27, which will allow VT to **continue receiving \$150+ million in federal SNAP benefits annually.**

Strategic Responses to Federal Funding Cuts

Federal funds make up about a third of the state's overall budget, and a critical percentage of funding for many programs serving Vermont's families with young children every day, including Reach Up, 3SquaresVT, emergency shelter and housing supports, Medicaid, and child care. The Federal FY26 Budget that is eventually passed by Congress, whether comprehensive or piecemeal, is likely to include substantial cuts to this funding. The Alliance will support strategic, timely, and coordinated advocacy responses to federal funding reductions that ensure our community's voices are heard, and that core needs are not unnecessarily pitted against one another. We will also support efforts to find increased state revenues to fill in gaps as possible.



Federal funding

Federal funds make up about one-third of the state's overall budget—about \$3.1 billion for FY26, compared to \$2.5 billion in General Fund in the total state budget of \$9.1 billion.

Notes:

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.