

Good Afternoon, please allow me to introduce myself. I am Ann Wheeler. I work for Easterseals Vermont as the Post Permanency Program Coordinator. I am here to request you consider increasing the base funding for Post Permanency Services Programs by \$300,000.

Adoption of a child is often one of life's most rewarding, yet challenging, decisions. Children who have been adopted through the Department of Children and Families (DCF) system often have significant challenges regarding adjustment issues, psychological scars, and relational deficits. Post permanency services can be instrumental in helping parents weather the storm of caring for a special needs adopted child and preventing adoption failure. Adoption dissolution is a particularly tragic event for adopted children given the fragility of their relationship history and frequent experiences with attachment disruptions. Adoption dissolution is also fraught with feelings of failure and guilt for families.

Because the field has come to understand that many adoptive families struggle long after the adoption, Vermont offers post adoption services as part of the continuity of care for traumatized children. Our program is free and voluntary for any adoptive or guardianship families statewide. The most common family to reach out to us for assistance are raising children with the severe behavioral or emotional problems. Often the caregivers are fatigued and resource poor.

This program, so important to these families, is also resource poor. Without any rate increase since 2011, we have struggled ourselves to keep this program in our Vermont communities. Once again, I am requesting you please consider increasing the base funding for Post Permanency Services Program by \$300,000.

Thank you for your time.

Ann Wheeler