

February 9th, 2023

Committee on Human Services

Testimony- Josh Miller- Executive Director- The Janet S. Munt Family Room- PCC

Thank you for all of your support this past year. It has allowed us to meet the complex needs of the families we serve and be there when they need us and build a healthy community!

The 15 Parent Child Centers statewide have been on the front lines supporting families and children in our respective communities. The recent funding has allowed us to support families, hire key positions and take care of much needed building repairs and maintenance. We are addressing food insecurity for nearly 12,000 Vermonters, providing culturally relevant and nutritious foods. Almost 5000 families were home visited over the course of this past 6 months supporting parents on a variety of issues- isolation, mental health, limited transportation, risk of eviction, child development and safety, prenatal and postpartum care and other issues as well. With the variety of refugees who are served by our centers, we are becoming more equipped to support and welcome them through interpretation and translation services, train our staff in cultural humility and hire staff who speak the languages of our families. We continue to partner with primary care providers, DCF, court and State agencies to help children stay out of State's custody. In a survey of over 600 parents, they reported an increase of 15-30% in each of the protective factors since they have been engaged in a Parent Child Center. Families know they will be welcomed and treated with dignity.

At our center, the Janet S. Munt Family Room, we are busy! Families are coming to us to for all sorts of reasons- they come because they are welcomed and feel a sense of belonging in our growing community. They come for food, support, information, friendship, child development resources, healthcare, and to raise their children. We are also partnering with UVM Psychiatry to provide mental health supports to families. We have a parents with teens support group, individual visits with psychiatrist at the Family Room and continue to provide support groups for parents, including our Super Group, which is a parent group that supports parents with children on the autism spectrum. Our fatherhood program is a vital part of the supports that male caregivers need too. With very few supports statewide, our fatherhood program allows for non-custodial dads to have supported visits with their children and be a part of a positive, healthy community. We also partner with DCF Family Services to provide space for Supervised Visits. As parents develop their skills and grow their network of support, the don't need to be

supervised, so they can have their visits in a supportive and safe environment amongst other parents and our staff and work toward reunification. We are working with parents to develop programming that meet their needs including parents with adopted children, LGBTQ+ group and a parents in recovery playgroup.

With the funding we have received, we are able to be nimble and flexible and responsive to emerging needs of our communities. We continue to strengthen our work with families in the prenatal phase and support the most vulnerable families. We hold workshops to help parents with tenants rights, voting processes and legal aid. We provide child care, interpretation services and food so parents can get valuable information from lawyers and other professionals as they navigate different challenges.

We hope you will continue to support our efforts as we help make Vermont a healthier, safer and better place to live, for all of our families.