

**Progress on the 2009 Recommendations of the Vermont Child Poverty Council**

Recommendations	Progress to Date
<i>Homelessness</i>	
<p>State government will provide sufficient funding for the Emergency Shelter Grant Program, General Assistance/Emergency Assistance, and other safety net programs.</p>	<p>Since 2007, the administration and Vermont legislature have consistently supported at-least level funding of the Homeless Shelters and Services line at \$792,000 in the budget of the Office of Economic Opportunity. These funds match the federal Emergency Shelter Grant. In recent years, the federal HUD portion (now called Emergency Solutions Grant) has been far less predictable, increasing under ARRA and then dropping by 25% in the past year. This recent federal contraction combined with increasing demand has placed pressure on the state’s network of homeless shelters.</p> <p>The Administration and Vermont legislature have supported at-least level funding of the GA/EA budget used for temporary shelter. Because homeless shelters in most parts of the state remain at capacity, and in the highest need area of Chittenden County we have lost shelter beds brought on line during ARRA, demand for temporary shelter has recently outpaced the annual appropriation. The legislature has historically approved one-time increase through the budget adjustment act. In the 2013 legislative session, legislators capped the amount of the GA budget which can be spent on temporary shelter at \$1.5M, well below the estimated \$4M spent on this same benefit in SFY ’13. The department has developed new rules and eligibility procedures to attempt to control spending in this area.</p> <p>Vermont has also used General Assistance funding once targeted only at temporary shelter to develop creative local and statewide initiatives, including Community Housing Grants (CHG), Vermont Rental Subsidy (VRS) Program, Family Supportive Housing Program (FSH) demonstrations, and a number of local pilots that emphasize case management in transitional housing.</p> <p>The Community Housing Grants were funded in the amount of \$2,899,961 for state fiscal year 2014. One Community Housing Grant was awarded in each of the Agency of Human Services (AHS) twelve districts throughout the state. The primary objectives of the Community Housing Grants are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To prevent an individual or family from becoming homeless or to help an individual or family regain stability in current housing or other permanent housing;</li> <li>• To help individuals or families living in shelters, publicly-funded motels, or places not meant for human habitation to move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing;</li> <li>• To provide case management for homeless individuals and families which will provide coordination for the</li> </ul>

	<p>household and provide more intensive interaction and services for clients deemed unlikely to resolve their housing crisis with short-term financial assistance alone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Assistance/Emergency Assistance programs were funded \$1.5 million for temporary housing assistance for the state fiscal year 2014.</li> </ul> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>State government will provide sufficient funding for supportive and transitional housing for low income families with special needs, including long-term commitments to fund the support services necessary for their success.</p>	<p>Since 2007, Vermont has expanded its commitment in the area of supportive and transitional housing for low income families with special needs. Examples include, but are not limited to: The Vermont Rental Subsidy Program; Family Supportive Housing; pilot programs for families transitioning from homelessness to housing; residential services for pregnant and parenting women.</p> <p>The Vermont Rental Subsidy Program (VRSP) was funded at \$500,000 for state fiscal year 2014. VRSP is a local solution to homelessness which provides state-funded rental assistance to formerly-homeless families and individuals whose monthly income would otherwise be insufficient to afford the cost of renting in their communities. Participants are paired with a housing support worker who helps the family stay connected with essential services critical to their success as renters. This housing support worker is the point of contact for participating landlords should a problem arise with the tenancy. Subsidies are intended to provide support for up to one year while the household is actively working to increase their income or secure other forms of longer-term affordable housing. Beyond supporting stability and permanence, the program provides a cost-effective and humane alternative to homelessness and emergency motel stays, both of which strain public budgets and place unnecessary pressure on families. <i>As of August 2013, the program currently provides affordable housing to 65 low-income families, consisting of 83 adults and 110 children.</i></p> <p>Since 2009, Reach Up has created 3 ½ housing case manager positions. They are located in St. Albans, Burlington, and Barre. The goal is to specifically help Reach Up families with support services for housing.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>The Council, the Governor, and the General Assembly will communicate with the Congressional delegation, the President, and other appropriate federal officials the necessity of ensuring that there is full funding for low income housing assistance programs and public housing.</p>	<p>The Vermont Council on Homelessness and the Vermont Housing Council have developed a joint resolution for local, state, and national leaders including the Congressional delegation, the President and other federal officials to return to program-based budgeting and prioritize the restoration funding to critical HUD and USDA programs that provide affordable housing, shelter and prevent homelessness for Vermont’s most vulnerable households rather than relying on shut downs, sequestration and across-the-board cuts to determine spending levels.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>

<i>Energy</i>	
<p>State government will prioritize energy affordability issues and continue to strive to find long-term affordable energy strategies.</p>	<p>In December 2012, Vermont required Green Mountain Power to provide a rate 25 percent discount to low income Vermonters on the first 600 kilowatt hours of usage. In July 2013, Vermont Gas System was required by legislation to provide low income Vermonters with a 20 percent discount on their entire VGS bill. Beginning in SFT2014 clients receiving fuel assistance benefits are a priority to receive</p> <p><u><i>Weatherization Assistance</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OEO prioritizes low income families with children, as well as family with elderly and differently-abled people.</li> <li>• This year OEO started to prioritize homes that have a high energy index, and homes receiving LIHEAP.</li> <li>• OEO served an average of 1,700 homes a year for the past 4 years.</li> <li>• Weatherization reduced fuel usage by an average of 30%-35% (heat and hot water) per year.</li> <li>• Weatherization installs significant health and safety measures related to the Weatherization work including the repair and replacement of faulty heating systems and appliances.</li> <li>• Weatherization has implemented “advanced customer education” in the past 2 years to further improve the benefits and effects of Weatherization for the customers.</li> <li>• Weatherization work and education results in a more efficient, comfortable, safer and more economical home.</li> </ul> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>The Council, the Governor, and the General Assembly will communicate with the Congressional delegation, the President, and other appropriate federal officials the necessity of ensuring that there is sufficient funding for energy affordability programs, especially the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).</p>	<p>For the first time in Vermont’s LIHEAP program history, for SFY2014 the state included a \$6.0 million allocation in the operating budget. Vermont consistently recommends to its Congressional delegation, Congress and the President allocation of sufficient funding for LIHEAP.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>The General Assembly will examine the state’s eligibility standards for LIHEAP due to the growing number of families who are unable to afford heat.</p>	<p>In April 2010, the Fuel Statute was amended to increase the maximum income level and simplify income and resource eligibility for to receive seasonal and crisis fuel assistance. Providing seasonal fuel assistance benefits for the first time to households with net incomes between 156 and 185 percent of the federal poverty was a progressive response to the addressing the fuel assistance “benefits cliff.”</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<i>Food and Nutrition</i>	
<p>The Secretary of Education will continue its efforts to ensure that every school has a free and reduced-price breakfast and lunch program available to low income children.</p>	<p>This has been achieved. Vermont is the first state in the nation to provide school meals --breakfast and lunch -- at no charge for all students qualifying for the federal reduced-price meals program.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by AoE]</b></p>

<p>State government will assist efforts by schools and communities to embrace the challenge of continuing meals programs through summers and school vacations.</p>	<p>Child Nutrition grants funded Hunger Free Vermont outreach and technical assistance to schools and community leaders to initiate or strengthen summer meal programs for low income children; the number of healthy meals and snacks served each summer increased by more than 134,000 from 2009 to 2012. (2013 data are not yet available to DCF.)  <b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p> <p>Work here is ongoing. We are seeking additional funding at the federal level and school districts are being encouraged to budget for providing meal programs through the summer months and during school vacations.  <b>[Response provided by AoE]</b></p>
<p>The Secretary of Education will assist eligible child care programs, especially those accepting child care subsidies from the Department for Children and Families, to participate in the Child Care Meals Program.</p>	<p>Work here is ongoing.  <b>[Response provided by AoE]</b></p>
<p>The Commissioner for Children and Families will work with the General Assembly to maximize state options and waivers available in the federal nutrition programs, such as Food Stamps, the child and adult care meals programs, and others to increase the number of families who are eligible to participate in the programs. The Department will also work with the General Assembly to ensure that eligible families are aware of and enrolled in these nutrition programs.</p>	<p>In FFY-2009, Vermont adopted categorical eligibility policies that expanded eligibility up to 185% of FPL removing its assets test for most 3SquaresVT households, such as developing a mechanism to eliminate the resource limit for working families receiving the VT Earned Income Tax Credit. These, plus the weak economy and benefit/policy changes provided by federal stimulus law resulted in the average monthly 3SquaresVT caseload growing by 51% from 66,506 for state FY 2009 to 100,156 for 2013. In August 2013, more than a third of the households participating were families with children. DCF/ESD and its community partners encouraged working parents receiving the VT EITC benefit to enroll in 3SquaresVT as a way to qualify their children for free school meals even if their income level was too high to qualify them for a 3SquaresVT food benefit; unfortunately, USDA ruled in 2012 that those zero-benefit families could no longer use 3SquaresVT participation as a way for their children to get free school meals. Meanwhile, DCF Child Nutrition grants have funded Hunger Free Vermont (HFVT) outreach and technical assistance to schools and communities to increase participation by low income children in federal child nutrition programs. Since 2009, HFVT has helped 22 school facilities start meal programs, giving an additional 4,000 students access to this benefit, and average daily participation in school breakfast programs increased by more than 41,000 children from 2009 to 2012. (2013 data are not yet available to DCF.)  <b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>The Commissioner for Children and Families will streamline the application process to ensure that families can easily access nutrition programs.</p>	<p>ESD established automated eligibility and processing for its Health, Fuel, SNAP and Reach Up participants through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit Service Center (BSC), established in 2011</li> <li>• Mybenefits.gov (online application and program information)</li> <li>• Application Document Processing Center (ADPC)</li> <li>• Phone interviews through a call center</li> </ul>

	<b>[Response provided by DCF]</b>
The Council, the Governor, and the General Assembly will advocate for changes at the federal level that will assist in increasing participation and benefits for families.	DCF sought Congressional support to reverse the USDA FNS decision about the free school meals to zero-benefit 3SquaresVT families, but FNS said child nutrition legislation required us to disallow it. USDA and VT Congressional staff regularly attend monthly meetings of the statewide 3SquaresVT workgroup that discusses ways federal policies or actions can or do affect access by Vermonters to federal nutrition program benefits. DCF/ESD staff joined many community partners in developing VT recommendations for the Farm Bill, legislation that governs 3SquaresVT and impacts other federal programs. <b>[Response provided by DCF]</b>
<b>Education</b>	
The State of Vermont will set a goal of eliminating both the disparities in test scores and high school graduation rates between low income children and their peers.	There are several initiatives in place to address this: extended day learning, summer learning opportunities, Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) and early college/dual enrollment. <b>[Response provided by AoE]</b>
The Secretary of Education will identify best practices for closing the achievement gap and build on the successes of many Vermont schools that are working to meet the needs of low income students.	The AoE, with help from an advisory panel representing K-12 schools and higher education, studied what it takes for schools to succeed. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed to identify the characteristics common to effective schools. It was learned that there is a set of attitudes and beliefs as well as specific school practices that are associated with student success, particularly that of low-income students. The report is titled “ <a href="http://rootsofsuccess.wordpress.com/report-materials/">Roots of Success: Effective Practices in Vermont Schools</a> ” and it can be found here: <a href="http://rootsofsuccess.wordpress.com/report-materials/">http://rootsofsuccess.wordpress.com/report-materials/</a> <b>[Response provided by AoE]</b>
The Commissioner for Children and Families and the Commissioner of Health will report to the Council and the General Assembly on whether existing programs targeted at school readiness are reaching all eligible families, especially those with children from birth to age three.	VDH/DCF support evidence based home visiting programs which have been shown to improve school readiness. In addition, our WIC program addresses the connection between nutrition and learning. We also provide technical assistance to early care settings regarding children nutrition and physical activity which improves school readiness. <b>[Response provided by VDH]</b>  No notable progress by DCF. <b>[Response provided by VDH]</b>
Expand capacity to assure access to high-quality pre-K services and Head Start and Early Head Start programs.	The State has not funded Head Start and early Head Start slots since 1999, but the State has explored doing this.  Reach Up has a memorandum of agreement with the Head Start program to coordinate services for all Reach Up participants. We also work collaboratively with early Head Start programs. <b>[Response provided by DCF]</b>
The Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Human Services will agree to a formal protocol to deploy teams to	No notable progress by DCF. <b>[Response provided by VDH]</b>

<p>work with schools and their communities to develop action plans that address the disparities of test scores between students eligible for free and reduced lunches and students who are not. Top priority will be given to those schools identified as being “in need of improvement.”</p>	<p><b>[No response provided by AoE]</b></p>
<p>The State of Vermont must recognize in its public policies that schools and educators are not solely responsible for the successful education of Vermont’s children. The effects of chronic poverty and other social problems will be addressed through strong partnerships among families, schools, communities, and state social service agencies.</p>	<p>No notable progress by DCF.  <b>[Response provided by VDH]</b></p> <p>Vermont Department of Labor (DOL) has programs and funding that help to address the challenges that Vermont’s youth face in career aspirations and readiness, through WIA Youth programs (at risk youth, summer employment opportunity, career development, work experience, occupational skills training, GED funding and support of high school completion, and other support services). DOL funds multiple internship programs for Vermont high school and college students. In addition, the WIA Adult funding provides work readiness assessment, skill training, job development, work experience, OJT, job placement, etc.  <b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p> <p><b>[No response provided by AoE]</b></p>
<p>The Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Human Services will develop models for the integration of family services into Vermont’s schools to provide the supports that children who are performing at lower levels need to catch up to their higher performing peers. The models will be promoted to school boards, superintendents, principals, teachers, and community groups.</p>	<p>No notable progress by DCF.  <b>[Response provided by VDH]</b></p> <p><b>[No response provided by AoE]</b></p>
<p>Capacity in afterschool programs will be expanded to assure access.</p>	<p><b>[No response provided by AoE]</b></p>
<p><b><i>Benefit Cliffs</i></b></p>	
<p>The Commissioner for Children and Families will contract for an analysis of Vermont’s benefit programs and their interaction with federal benefit programs to identify the cliffs facing working Vermont parents.</p>	<p>An initial review of Vermont’s current system (Benefits Cliff) was completed by the NCCP in its December 2008 report entitled "Work Supports in Vermont - An Analysis of the Effectiveness of State Policies Supporting Work".</p> <p>In April 2009, Governor Douglas convened the "Governor's Summit on Pathways to Economic Stability". The number one recommendation from that conference was to further tackle the “benefits cliff” phenomenon</p>

	<p>In January 2010, the Secretary of the Agency of Human Services issued the report, Addressing the Benefits Cliff: Recommendations for Further Action. This report addresses issues relative to the “benefits cliff” in three areas. First, it reviews action steps taken since the December 2008 report, some specifically recommended by NCCP and which were in the midst of implementation. These actions were narrow in scope and address specific programs in the short term. Second, it provides further analysis and specific recommendations regarding moving forward. Most of these recommendations are similar in nature. They affect tax or spending policy related to “benefits cliffs.” There are recommendations for immediate action. Finally, the report describes a project that the agency had begun to undertake to more comprehensively look at all benefits programs across AHS and perhaps state government to determine if there is a more comprehensive approach to addressing this issue. Ideally, this would lead to a broad waiver from federal requirements.</p> <p>In the Spring of 2013, a small group reconvened to analyze the Benefits Cliff. After analysis it was determined that the high cost of childcare was a major factor contributing to the Benefit Cliff and, with no extra funding, a proposal was made to expand childcare and lower the cost by shifting funds from the State EITC to childcare.</p> <p>Vermont has made steady progress in reducing the rate of uninsured, as evidenced by an overall 3 percent decrease in the uninsured rate for adults and 2.4 percent decrease for children from 2007 to 2012. As of December 2012, Vermont’s uninsured rates were estimated to be at 6.8 percent for adults and 2.5 percent for children. Vermont is focused on implementation of the new Affordable Care Act (ACA) regulations and development of a new health insurance exchange (Vermont Health Connect).</p> <p>The new health care rules will become effective on January 1, 2014, and the new health insurance exchange became operational on October 1, 2013. Vermont Health Connect will allow individuals, families and small businesses to access public or private health insurance. Navigators, brokers and assisters are available to assist the public with their health insurance questions and decisions.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>The Commissioner for Children and Families will collaborate with the Commissioner of Taxes to determine whether changes in tax incentives for low income families could be complementary with benefit programs.</p>	<p>DCF attempted to fund an expansion of childcare by limiting State EITC.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>Informed by the results of that analysis, the Commissioner for Children and Families will develop a proposal to adjust Vermont’s benefit programs to end benefit cliffs and move</p>	<p>No notable progress by DCF.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by VDH]</b></p>

to benefit “step-downs” so as to eliminate economic disincentives for wage advancement.	
At the same time, the Commissioner for Children and Families will develop a proposal for presentation to the next federal administration to have Vermont serve as a demonstration project for adjustment of federal benefit programs to end benefit cliffs and move to benefit step-downs. The goal of the demonstration project will be to determine if, over time, step-downs are an effective alternative to cliffs to help move working parents out of poverty and keep them out of poverty.	<p>No formal proposal has taken place at this time. There have been discussions but no formal analysis regarding a federal waiver to bundle benefits in order to give the recipients more flexibility and control in their efforts to move out of poverty.</p> <p>The Reach Up program has added the Reach Ahead program which is a 12 month food benefit (\$100 for six months/ \$50 for six months) for people leaving Reach Up for income. Reach Ahead is an effort to mitigate the benefit cliff.</p> <p>The Reach Up Policy Workgroup is currently considering efforts to disregard the income for Reach Up participants who exit the program and allow them to continue on the grant for a short period of time.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<i>Career and Workforce Development</i>	
The Commissioner for Children and Families and the Commissioner of Labor will establish clearly defined connections between Reach Up participants and Next Generation funding. This effort will include recruiting Reach Up participants to enroll in Next Generation-funded training programs, working with employers to develop training programs targeted at Reach Up participants, and developing the necessary pretraining programs to enable participants to have the greatest opportunity for successful job training.	<p>DOL has developed a workplace readiness credential and Work Keys program that is available to Reach Up participants.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Reach-Up participants would, in most cases, be eligible for WIA funding. WIA Adult funding provides work readiness assessment, skill training, job development, work experience, OJT, job placement, etc. WIA funding also provides for a variety of support services, if those services help remove barriers to employment.</li> <li>2. The Next Generation statutory language focuses on (1) “the skills of Vermont workers, including those who are unemployed, under-employed or in transition”, and (2) “internships”. Some of the projects that have been, or are currently, funded by Next Generation, as recommended by the Workforce Development Council Executive Committee, have included programs to assist employment-challenged and/or economically-disadvantaged youth and adults, including, but not limited to, the Governor’s Career Readiness Certificate (joint program with CCV), Dual Enrollment, AHS child care worker training, CVCAC Community Kitchen culinary training, \$360K to adult tech education centers, Vermont Works for Women, Youth Build of ReSource, PCA training with VNA, etc.</li> </ol> <p><b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p>
The Commissioner of Labor and the Commissioner for Children and Families will develop and administer the necessary support and wrap-around services to enhance participation and success in education and training programs.	<p>AHS did develop Creative Workforce Solutions which, in conjunction with DOL, would assist AHS customers in getting job training and employment.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p> <p>The Reach-Up participants would, in most cases, be eligible for WIA funding. WIA Adult funding provides work</p>



	<p>readiness assessment, skill training, job development, work experience, OJT, job placement, etc. WIA funding also provides for a variety of support services, if those services help remove barriers to employment.</p> <p>2. The Next Generation statutory language focuses on (1) “the skills of Vermont workers, including those who are unemployed, under-employed or in transition”, and (2) “internships”. Some of the projects that have been, or are currently, funded by Next Generation, as recommended by the Workforce Development Council Executive Committee, have included programs to assist employment-challenged and/or economically-disadvantaged youth and adults, including, but not limited to, the Governor’s Career Readiness Certificate (joint program with CCV), Dual Enrollment, AHS child care worker training, CVCAC Community Kitchen culinary training, \$360K to adult tech education centers, Vermont Works for Women, Youth Build of ReSource, PCA training with VNA, etc. See all of DOL responses, including the WIA Youth information.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p>
<p>The Commissioner for Children and Families and the Commissioner of Labor will continue to place appropriate Reach Up and other low income youth in Next Generation-sponsored career exploration and alternative education programs.</p>	<p>Young Reach Up participants (16 to 21) are routinely enrolled in DOL sponsored summer work programs.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p> <p>Vermont Department of Labor (DOL) has programs and funding that help to address the challenges that Vermont’s youth face in career aspirations and readiness, through WIA Youth programs (at risk youth, summer employment opportunity, career development, work experience, occupational skills training, GED funding and support of high school completion, and other support services). DOL funds multiple internship programs for Vermont high school and college students. We are also revamping our apprenticeship and industry credentialing programs.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p>
<p>The General Assembly will explore expansion of existing microbusiness programs.</p>	<p><u>IDAs - The Vermont Individual Development Account</u> project is a matched savings and financial education program that helps low to moderate Vermonters to get ahead and improve their futures through creating financial assets. They are able to use these savings to start a business (self-employment costs), help finance a post-secondary education, or purchase a home.</p> <p>Since its start in 1997 the program has served over 1,335, many of whom are still saving. For FY 2013 there were 96 people making matched withdrawals (64 businesses, 18 education, 14 homes). They invested a total of \$184,935 in savings and match for their assets. Since the beginning, 807 people have made matched withdrawals (448 businesses, 177 education, 161 homes, 21 other). They invested a total of \$2,855,908 in savings and match for their assets.</p> <p>The amount of funding the IDA program receives directly affects the number of folks who can participate. The</p>

	<p>program started out with state funding of \$250,000 in the first year and was reduced to about \$159,000 and remained steady at that funding level for a number of years. The program was zeroed out in the proposed 2010 budget but was restored at a reduced level using some ARRA and other funding available at the time.</p> <p>In the 2011 budget as passed, the legislature included this language <i>“It is the intent of the general assembly to fully fund the IDA program in future fiscal years as an important tool for the state’s economic development through providing matched savings for starting small businesses and through promotion of financial literacy.”</i></p> <p>The State funding for the IDA, through the Office of Economic Opportunity has remained at the reduced level of funding (\$135,300) since 2010.</p> <p><u><i>MBDP - The Micro Business Development Program</i></u> of the Vermont Community Action Agencies provides training and counseling for low to moderate income Vermonters who are planning to start or expand a microenterprise. Whether they start or expand a business, clients get training in employment soft skills, planning, and personal and household financial management, including help with building their credit or paying down debt. Some joined the IDA and are saving for a non-business goal.</p> <p>Since 1988, the program has served more than 10,000 Vermonters. Last year, services reached 735 people, resulting in 90 business starts/expansions, 62 business enhancements, and 67 full time equivalent jobs created.</p> <p>Baseline funding for MBDP reached its highest level in FY2009 at \$365,900. It decreased to \$298,870 in FY2011, FY2012 and FY2013. That leaves the current funding level per CAP agency at \$59,774, the lowest level since FY2006.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF &amp; Karen Lafayette]</b></p>
<i>Career Pathways</i>	
<p>The Commissioner of Labor and the Secretary of Education will develop pilot programs for career pathways, possibly in the health care and construction trades sectors.</p>	<p>AHS created Integrated Family Services. This early intervention, treatment and support system will actively collaborate with AoE on efforts to unify services for families in a comprehensive manner.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p> <p>The AOE works with secondary schools and regional career centers to develop rigorous and relevant programs that help learners identify and pursue their career and life goals. Our work on Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) and early college/dual enrollment also supports these recommendations.</p>

	<p><b>[Response provided by AoE]</b></p> <p>DOL is working closely with AoE on Tech Center education and Internship programs, as well as with key partners for health care training (community care programs, hospitals, VNA, AALV), and with trades/construction trainers and advocates (Vermont Works for Women, Vermont Building Trades/AFL-CIO, CNC training with Lyndon State College, Vermont HITEC, Youth Build on construction and green jobs, CVCAC on green jobs, etc.). DOL is also revamping its Apprenticeship and Industry Credentialing programs, in consultation with AoE.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p>
<p>The Commissioner of Labor and Secretary of Education will look to models in other states for guidance. Specifically, the Commissioner and Secretary will study efforts including Carreres en Salud, the successful nursing program developed by the Instituto Del Progreso Latino, Association House of Chicago, Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC) of Wilbur Wright College, and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) in Chicago, Illinois.</p>	<p>This review of these specific programs has not been engaged in by DOL, but perhaps AoE has begun these efforts. DOL and AoE are regularly communicating about career pathways, as is the Workforce Development Council, which operates under the DOL structure.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p> <p><b>[No response provided by AoE]</b></p>
<p><i>Rural Economic Development</i></p>	
<p>State government will improve and expand existing economic development programs specifically designed to meet the unique needs of rural Vermont.</p>	<p>The 2012 Legislative session brought with it a renewed commitment to Vermonters’ values by passing the Working Lands Enterprise initiative, Act 142 (<a href="http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/2012/Acts/ACT142.pdf">http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/2012/Acts/ACT142.pdf</a>), for the management and investment of \$1 million into agricultural and forestry based businesses. Over 97 percent of Vermonters value the Working Landscape. Approximately 20 percent of Vermont’s land is used for agricultural purposes and 75 percent as forestry. The backbone of Vermont’s “working landscape” is the economic viability of the agriculture and forestry based businesses. It is Vermont’s working landscape that allows us to be a key economic engine within the northeast metropolitan markets of the regional food system.</p> <p>Some of the goals of the Working Lands initiative, as outlined in the Findings section of Act 142, are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stimulate a concerted economic development effort on behalf of Vermont’s agriculture and forest product sectors by systematically advancing entrepreneurship, business development, and job creation;</li> <li>2. Increase the value of Vermont’s raw and value-added products through the development of in-state and export markets;</li> <li>3. Attract a new generation of entrepreneurs to Vermont’s farm, food system, forest, and value-added chain by facilitating more affordable access to the working landscape; and</li> <li>4. Increase the amount of state investment in working lands enterprises, particularly when it leverages private and</li> </ol>

	<p>philanthropic funds.</p> <p>Act 142 created the Working Lands Enterprise Fund and the Working Lands Enterprise Board.</p> <p><i>The Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB)</i></p> <p>The WLEB is made up of private sector members throughout the supply chains of agriculture and forestry, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks &amp; Recreation, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Vermont Housing Conservation Board, Vermont Economic Development Authority, and Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund. Visit the WLEB website for news and updates about the Board and Fund: <a href="http://www.vermontworkinglands.com">www.vermontworkinglands.com</a>.</p> <p><i>The Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF)</i></p> <p>The Working Lands Enterprise Fund demonstrates the state’s investment in the working lands enterprise economy. The fund is directed by the WLEB and is administered by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food &amp; Markets. The funding categories are identified by the Vermont legislature in Act 142 and defined by the WLEB. The WLEB will be announcing the RFP’s (Request for Proposals) to apply for grants from the fund on November 29, 2012.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by Paul Costello, Vermont Council on Rural Development]</b></p>
<p>The Council will include state agency and community partners who specialize in rural economic development in pursuing the shared goal of creating infrastructure, developing innovative job creation programs, and ensuring supports for families seeking employment or creating a small business.</p>	<p>DOL supports all regions of the state, including rural areas; for example, the Governor assigned DOL the responsibility for the workforce education and development to support the NEK Development project, supporting the NEK area (highest regional unemployment rate in Vermont). DOL also awards regional economic partnership grants across the state, seeking innovative job training, education and recruitment programs. DOL also has a grant for long-term unemployed to create their own small business, in conjunction with work with VTSBDC. DOL is also involved in the workforce redeployment work that will need to occur in Windham county as a result of VY closing.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p>
<b>Housing</b>	
<p>The General Assembly’s work on housing will continue to focus on increasing the supply of safe and affordable housing and improving the energy efficiency of low income homes and rental units.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><i>Supply of Affordable Rental Units</i></p> <p>Below is a summary of affordable housing units for FY 2010 – FY 2013 that were assisted through Vermont’s statewide housing funding agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)</li> <li>• Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)</li> <li>• Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for complete response.

Rental units funded collectively with federal and state programs: (June 2009 – June 2013)	Units
Preserved subsidized housing units (includes both rehabilitation and/or refinancing)	1,359
Rehabilitated units that were not formerly subsidized housing (new to subsidized inventory)	35
New construction	263
Adaptively reused buildings (not previously housing)	54
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,711</b>

The Vermont Rental Subsidy Program (VRSP) provides state-funded rental assistance to formerly-homeless families and individuals whose monthly income would otherwise be insufficient to afford the cost of renting in their communities. Subsidies are intended to provide support for up to one year while the household is actively working to increase their income or secure other forms of longer-term affordable housing.

Family Supportive Housing (FSH) is a targeted demonstration project developed by DCF to reduce child homelessness in Vermont. The program supports families who are homeless as they move into affordable housing and provides up to 24 months of case management support and coordination during their transition to permanent housing.

Between July 2008 and June 2013, DHCD’s Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) provided \$2,152,000 in CDBG funding to support the rehabilitation, expansion, and creation of facilities and programs that serve more than 1,000 low income children all across Vermont. \$1,023,000 in federal funding supported the rehabilitation and expansion of two homeless shelters serving families in Vermont’s Champlain Valley.

Energy Efficiency in Affordable Rental Units

All of the units funded through the state’s housing agencies were subject to design and energy efficiency standards adopted by the state housing agencies.

VHCB and VHFA updated their energy standards to a more rigorous level for substantial renovation projects. The Vermont Public Service Board has made adjustments to their discount rate and allowance for societal and low

income benefits so measures recommended under the newly adopted standards will screen as cost effective.

Vermont Fuel Efficiency Partnership (VFEP) began program design and implementation in late 2009. It is a partnership between the Vermont Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), the state housing agencies, local housing agencies, and Efficiency Vermont. The purpose is to augment technical and financial resources of the partners to achieve a higher level of efficiency in affordable multifamily retrofit projects. Currently VFEP funding is a portion of ongoing RGGI revenues and Forward Capacity Market (FCM) monies, funneled by DPS through Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, in its role as Efficiency Vermont. Efficiency Vermont has committed to ongoing funding, as long as RGGI and FCM revenues continue and the DPS and Public Service Board so direct.

Setbacks in Affordable Rental Housing

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is the federal government's major effort to help low-income families, senior citizens, and people with disabilities afford private housing. In Vermont, eight local public housing authorities and the Vermont State Housing Authority (VSHA) administer the federal HUD Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

As a result of federal funding reductions (more than \$5.5 million dollars in VT) over the past several years combined with the most recent federal sequestration, Vermont's Public Housing Authorities will be serving 774 fewer households. Housing authorities are authorized 6,792 vouchers but only have funding to support 6,098 vouchers.

Housing providers struggle with the lowering of the Section 8 program fair market rents (FMRs) which act as a cap on the amount of subsidy the Housing Choice Vouchers can contribute. Vermont has seen reductions in the FMRs.

Critical to the development, preservation, and renovation of assisted housing is "gap financing" or grants to supplement equity from federal and state housing tax credits. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit, the largest capital funding source administered by VHFA, saw an uptick with some federal stimulus funding.

Community Development Block Grants (VCDP) – At the time of the Council's 2009 report, the state's annual allocation of CDBG funds administered by DHCD was \$7.303 million (Federal Fiscal Year 2008). It rose to \$8.048 million in FFY 2010 and has since been cut to \$6.571 million in FFY13 – a reduction of 18%.

HOME Block Grant – This is the only block grant provided to the states exclusively for housing. In Vermont, HOME funds are used for renovation and new construction of permanently affordable rental housing, and are used

in conjunction with VHCB funding to leverage equity investments from the private sector.

*Supply of Homeownership Opportunities*

Since 2009 the state housing agencies (VHFA, VHCB, and CDBG) have supported the development of 208 new homes targeted at families between 60% and 110% of median income. These homes have received funding through a state affordable housing tax credit allocated by VHFA, and some grants from DHCD and VHCB.

Some of these homeowners received Homeland Grants from VHCB. These grants, provided to local non-profits, can be used in new construction or existing homes, and provides further permanent affordability. VHCB has funded 62 shared appreciation homeownership units.

In response to the foreclosure crisis, the Housing Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (HERA) established the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). The State of Vermont was awarded \$24.9 million from the NSP, administered by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD).

The primary purpose of the HARP program is to acquire homes that had been foreclosed upon, return them to good and marketable condition, and at the same time, significantly improve the energy efficiency of each home. In order to make the HARP homes more affordable to Vermont families, a certain portion of the HARP funds invested in each home are left in the home as a subsidy to each home buyer. In exchange for these subsidies, the homeowners agree that the home will only be sold in the future to buyers at or below the program maximum of 120% of the area median income (AMI).

A new Mobile Home Down Payment Assistance Program was launched in 2012 with support from the legislature in the form of additional state affordable housing tax credits allocated to VHFA. These resources are being administered statewide by the Champlain Housing Trust.

The state housing agencies have continued to support Manufactured Housing Parks that may need assistance with nonprofit or resident acquisition and infrastructure improvement. Six communities consisting of 147 lots have been assisted.

*Energy Efficiency and Home Repair in Affordable Homeownership*

DCF's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) works with the local homeownership centers (HOCs) and Efficiency Vermont (EVT). The HOCs and EVT also provide some subsidized assistance to low and moderate income families

	<p>not eligible for WAP.</p> <p>This year OEO started to prioritize homes that have a high energy index, and homes receiving LIHEAP funding. OEO served an average of 1,700 homes a year for the past four years. Weatherization reduced fuel usage by an average of 30% to 35% (heat and hot water) per year.</p> <p>During the period July 2008 through June 2013, the DHCD's VCDP provided \$6,450,000 in federal CDBG funds to support the life, safety, and energy efficiency improvements to the homes of 662 low income Vermonters.</p> <p>One exciting very recent program is the development of a Manufactured Housing Innovation Project by VHCB. This was supported by High Meadows Foundation, and is a pilot program to produce energy efficient mobile homes.</p> <p><u>Setbacks in Affordable Homeownership</u></p> <p>The most devastating setback for primarily homeownership housing in the state was Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 which temporarily or permanently displaced approximately 1,400 households including many families with children. Credit standards and the ability to get mortgage insurance for low income families was dramatically affected by the recession.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by Sarah Carpenter, Vermont Housing Finance Agency]</b></p>
<p>State government will restore full funding for the Housing and Conservation Board Trust Fund, a nationally recognized program that has made significant increases in the stock of affordable housing.</p>	<p>The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) funding from the State of Vermont has increased to just over \$14 million in FY 14, with 53% going to the affordable housing mission in the current year. This appropriation reflected full transfer tax funding prior to an upgrade in the revenue forecast and after the Governor's budget was put together. This compares with a \$16.4 million budget in FY2000 (which included a \$6 million appropriation from a surplus) and \$15.4 million in FY 06.</p> <p>After suffering greatly through the recession, the housing market has now recovered and the property transfer tax is projected to generate \$17.73 million in FY 15. If this full amount is appropriated it will mark the highest level of state commitment yet appropriated. These funds are desperately needed as Vermont has suffered more than \$5 million in losses of federal housing funds providing capital to build and rehabilitate housing through cuts to HOME, CDBG, federal earmarks, the RD 515, and HUD 202 programs. Increasing demand is generated from several directions: the need to increase supply in the state's tightest housing markets; the need to preserve existing affordable housing developments, especially those with Section 8 contracts that provide rental assistance to our most vulnerable citizens; the need to alleviate shortages caused by the loss of housing from Tropical Storm Irene; and the abandonment by HUD and the federal government of responsibility for continued investment in approximately</p>



	<p>1,800 apartments owned by Vermont's Public Housing Authorities.  <b>[Response provided by Sarah Carpenter, Vermont Housing Finance Agency]</b></p>
<p>State government will provide a fair and consistent housing code enforcement system to bring substandard housing up to code, enforce lead paint eradication, and ensure the existing housing supply does not become unsafe over time.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>In 2008, a legislative Rental Housing Safety Committee was established to assess whether enforcement should remain local or be led at the state level, and how these efforts might be more significantly supported. The majority of the Committee felt that a good start would be to establish some sort of apartment registry. The legislative Rental Housing Safety Committee report can be found at <a href="http://www.vhfa.org/documents/act176.pdf">http://www.vhfa.org/documents/act176.pdf</a>. None of the recommendations to date have been explicitly adopted by the legislature. However, one outcome of the study committee was the establishment of a Vermont Rental Housing Codes website <a href="http://www.rentalcodes.org/">http://www.rentalcodes.org/</a>.</p> <p>There are 11 municipalities that have their own housing code enforcement programs. These are operated under codes promulgated through VDH and Vermont Division of Fire Safety (DFS). The other municipalities more generally use volunteers as the Local Health Officers and rely on some enforcement through DFS and the Attorney General's Office (AGO).</p> <p>VDH, which oversees the Rental Housing Codes, has recently developed a robust training program for Local Health Officers and now produces a manual for volunteers in this role. Every town is required to select at least one Local Health Officer for the Commissioner to appoint to a three year term. Most enforcement of the Vermont State Rental Housing Health code is intended to be done on the local level and VDH serves as a technical advisor to towns.</p> <p>DFS conducts fire and life safety housing inspections on both new or renovation projects, which require permitting from the DFS office, and require inspectors to have an active role inspecting the project through completion. When complaints are received, the local regional office assigns an inspector to the building. The DFS policy is to inspect the entire building, not just the unit the complaint originates from. DFS inspectors also try to obtain lists from local towns on rental housing for more random inspections.</p> <p><u><i>Lead Paint Eradication and Healthy Homes</i></u>  VDH transitioned from the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) to the new Healthy Homes Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. This change expands the program beyond lead hazards in homes and takes a more holistic view of the home as a system. The program still centers on children who have tested above the level of concern for lead poisoning, but the case manager now offers and conducts an entire Healthy Homes Inspection to help families, in both owner-occupied and rental housing, maintain a healthier living environment.</p>

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for complete response.

VDH also created an online Essential Maintenance Practices (EMP) system which allows property owners to more efficiently file their annual EMP compliance statements. Property owners of rental housing built before 1978 are required to file an annual compliance statement ensuring an annual inspection and necessary repairs have been made for peeling lead paint.

*Setbacks in Lead Paint Eradication*

Congress has virtually eliminated CDC funding to states to pay for surveillance and case management services for lead poisoned children. The VDH has had to increasingly use state and other money to fund its Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. In 2011, Vermont became one of the first states to lower the “level of concern” for lead in children’s blood, recognizing the growing body of research that shows any lead exposure harms children’s development. The State also instituted mandatory lead screening for all one and two year olds.

Funding available from HUD has been more stable. The VHCB has been awarded two Lead Hazard Control Grants in 2010 (\$3.1 million) and 2013 (\$2.3 million). Together these grants allow VHCB to control lead paint hazards in approximately 380 housing units serving low income families. VHCB was also awarded a HUD Healthy Homes Production Grant in 2012.

Enforcement of lead paint eradication and other environmental hazards has been difficult for local officials, but has been a priority of the AGO.

*Lead Paint and Housing Enforcement Efforts*

The AGO has brought over 50 enforcement actions since late 2007. In addition to cases referred by VDH, the AGO has reached out to potential non-compliant landlords asking them to come into compliance within 90 days if they are presently out of compliance. No action is taken after the 90-day letter if the landlord brings the property into compliance within the 90 days. Landlords who are unable to do so stipulate to a schedule for bringing property into compliance and to penalties for previous and future noncompliance.

Enforcement actions have concerned: false filing of essential maintenance practice (EMP) statements, failure to comply with a VDH Work Plan, failure to respond to notice from VDH or AGO, and failure to comply with prior Assurance of Discontinuance entered into with VDH.

**[Response provided by Sarah Carpenter, Vermont Housing Finance Agency]**

<p>State government will continue its efforts to ensure universal access to high-quality, affordable physical, dental, and mental health care, and to promote healthy communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bright Futures Guidelines for health supervision adopted as Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) Medicaid mandate and ACA implementation. The EPSDT Program elicits public input on a monthly basis (face-to-face meetings) from representatives of the Vermont Chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American College of Physicians. Program staff also meet monthly with the leadership of the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program, with active engagement of a parent representative. The VDH collaborates with these partners in order to reduce barriers to health care for children receiving Medicaid/Dr. Dynasaur, to assist VDH in the development of more efficient and effective health care services for children and families through consultation with the health care professional community, and to identify and improve systems of care for children at risk. The benefits of this collaboration often extend beyond just the Medicaid population to Vermont children and families in general.</li> <li>• Ongoing involvement with Blueprint for Health and health reform efforts to include essential benefits for children, including dental care.</li> <li>• The Vermont Pediatric Council (VPC) is based upon a national model developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics; its purpose is to foster enhanced communication among pediatricians, insurers, public health professionals and others committed to improving the health status of and health care for Vermont's children. It provides a forum in which to identify issues of importance in the care of children; discuss the impact of payer policies and practices on the provision of pediatric care; provide education and information regarding issues of mutual concern; share ideas for resolution of issues between pediatricians and payers; and develop collaboration and common ground from which to work toward high quality, cost effective health care for children in Vermont. Examples of issues discussed include, but are not limited to, covered services, plan policies, coding policies, administrative procedures, and quality improvement.</li> </ul> <p><b>[Response provided by VDH]</b></p>
<p>The Department of Vermont Health Access and the Department of Health will prioritize children's access to quality physical, dental, and mental health care with an emphasis on hard-to-access services.</p>	<p>Vermont Department of Health's Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program carries out the Medicaid mandate that all children receive the same high quality health and dental care. This includes guidelines for preventive services and reminder letters to families about access. We also work with schools and school nurses to carry out this mandate by ensuring health and dental access.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by VDH]</b></p>
<p>State government will determine why uninsured children remain uninsured and propose a plan to reach universal coverage of children and pregnant women.</p>	<p>See above. In general, under 3 percent of Vermont's children are uninsured, often by parental choice. We work with our medical providers and our WIC staff to enroll uninsured children and families.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by VDH]</b></p>

<p>The Department of Health will continue to focus on prevention programs which improve the social and physical environments of children in order to enhance their health and cognitive, behavioral, and physical development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above (re: Bright Futures)</li> <li>• Evidenced based home visiting for first time pregnant women on Medicaid (Nurse Family Partnership) <b>Home visiting services</b> means regular, voluntary visits with a pregnant woman or family with a young child for the purpose of providing an array of services designed to improve maternal and child health; prevent child injuries, abuse, or maltreatment; promote social and emotional health; improve school readiness; reduce crime or domestic violence; improve economic self-sufficiency; and/or enhance coordination and referrals among community resources and supports, such as food, housing, and transportation.</li> </ul> <p><b>[Response provided by VDH]</b></p>
<p><i>Child Care for Working Families</i></p>	
<p>The General Assembly will invest in the child care subsidy program in these three ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase eligibility guidelines incrementally to match the current cost of living.</li> <li>Increase subsidy rates incrementally so that they provide parents access to 75% of the child care offered in their area (as per federal standards).</li> <li>Adjust eligibility guidelines and subsidy rates annually to keep pace with inflation.</li> </ol>	<p>The Child Development Division restructured its childcare financial assistance in January 2010 to bring eligibility standards up to the 2010 FPL and set rates that allow access to 75% of higher quality care. These gains made child care significantly more affordable for lower income Vermonters. It will provide incentives for providers to reach higher quality standards.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>The Department for Children and Families will make recommendations on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to increase the availability of child care for parents working alternative hours and weekends.</li> <li>How to increase access to quality care for underserved populations such as infants and toddlers, afterschool children, and children with special needs.</li> <li>How to improve the quality of child care available to all children.</li> </ol>	<p>Response will be forthcoming from CDD.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>

<i>Transportation</i>	
State government will expand (and renew funding for) existing individual development account programs to allow for savings related to car purchases, as well as evaluate current programs that provide transportation-related assistance to low income Vermonters. The state should explore the need for additional resources and program expansion, such as revolving loan funds, in light of community needs.	<p>OEO has developed an asset development component within its Family Supportive Housing Program in which homeless families who are housed receive financial education, credit repair and matched savings which can be withdrawn to meet their life goals including transportation related purchases. OEO and the Community Action programs have developed a plan to expand this asset development model to include Reach Up participants and will present this model.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
State government will continue its efforts to increase the availability of public transportation, especially in our rural areas.	<p>a. The State Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has increased the budget for and availability of public transit for both commuter services; fixed route bus services; demand response services; and volunteer services.</p> <p>b. Since 2009, VTrans has awarded funds for new commuter services from rural areas into areas of high employment such as the route from St. Johnsbury to Montpelier; Stowe to Waterbury with connectivity to Burlington and Montpelier; routes into White River Junction from Randolph and Bradford as well as Bellows Falls and Springfield; increased commuter service along Rt. 7 between Bennington, Rutland, Middlebury and Burlington; and additional service connecting Bennington and Brattleboro among others. VTrans pays particular attention to serving trip generators such as education facilities which are well used by those working themselves toward self-sufficiency.</p> <p>c. In November of 2013 VTrans will award funding for three intercity routes, one between Springfield, MA and White River Junction area continuing existing Greyhound service, one between White River Junction and Rutland, and one from Albany, NY to Burlington, VT. Service in these areas have not run for 7 years.</p> <p>d. VTrans has begun funding smaller vehicles more suited to low density rural areas and more economical for demand response service allowing for continued expansion of service.</p> <p>e. VTrans has regularly funded routes specifically designed as Job Access routes, which has brought new services to employment centers across the state.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by Barbara Donovan, Agency of Transportation]</b></p>
State government will work with localities to review existing public transportation systems and explore potential changes to public services in order to increase the access of low income parents to employment opportunities, child care, and other resources.	<p>a. VTrans works closely with local and regional planning agencies, local transit services, local committees for the elderly and disabled, and DVHA, which funds the Medicaid program. These programs are run collaboratively using VTrans vehicles, facilities, and software.</p> <p>b. VTrans runs the go!Vermont program which subsidizes and promotes car and vanpooling, information services, and emergency rides home, all of which have been proved to reduce expenses for low income families and make lower cost services a viable option for those with children at home.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by Barbara Donovan, Agency of Transportation]</b></p>

	<p>Reach Up provides funds for programs such as Car Coach (education, financing and car repair) and Ready To Go (statewide on demand transportation system through Good News Garage) and purchases an average of 80 cars per year for Reach Up participants through a partnership with the Good News Garage.</p> <p>Reach Up partners with Medicaid to provide Medicaid transportation for Reach Up participants throughout the State.</p> <p>Reach Up works with Reach Up participants in assisting to repair bad credit for purposes of purchasing a car in the future.  <b>[Response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<i>Strengthening Families and Communities</i>	
<p>State government will continue to support prevention programs designed to help families before they are in crisis.</p>	<p>DOL supports economically challenged adults and youth through WIA funding.  <b>[Response provided by DOL]</b></p> <p><b>[No response provided by DCF]</b></p>
<p>State government will support nonprofit community organizations working to strengthen families such as the community action programs, parent-child center network, the teen parent education programs, and others.</p>	<p>Reach Up is working with designated community mental health agencies and preferred providers in 6 districts to provide clinical and case management supports for Reach Up participants with substance abuse and mental health needs.</p> <p>Reach Up has instituted a 180 day rule that continues benefits when a child is out of the home for any reason when reunification is likely.</p> <p>Reach Up partners with all but one Parent Child Center for case management services for young mothers and their children.</p> <p>Reach Up now counts Teen Parent Education programs as part of the work requirement.</p> <p>AHS developed Integrated Family Services to support health promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment and support. The system will strive to intervene early in a preventive fashion, and provide services to the family unit. Each child and family in the early intervention, treatment and support system will have measurable goals against which progress will be assessed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The health promotion system will work to create healthy environments and communities as well as promote wellness within a family.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention will intervene in the most natural settings in order to promote mental health and developmental health.</li> <li>• The early intervention, treatment and support system will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- retain content experts in early childhood, mental health, developmental disability, substance use, etc.,</li> <li>- operate with standards for best practice and,</li> <li>- develop unified AHS guidelines for effective treatment and family support.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The early intervention, treatment and support system will be readily available to meet the child protection and guardianship responsibilities of the state.</li> </ul> <p>Reach Up has grants with every Parent/Child center in the State for case management and job coaching. Reach Up also has grants with some Community Action programs.</p> <p>Strengthening Families is a DCF demonstration project in three communities which contracts with the Parent Child Centers to work on open cases for Family Services by providing a more intense service delivery system.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF &amp; nongovernmental Council members]</b></p>
<p>State government will bring the community together to share and develop best practices at the community level.</p>	<p>Vermont Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness works on best practice for housing and homelessness at the policy level.</p> <p>OEO Housing Advisory Committee works on best practice for emergency shelters, transitional and permanent housing at the practice level.</p> <p>OEO Community of Practice for Family Supportive Housing works on best practice for supportive housing. Reach Up Community of Practice works on best practice in providing mental health and substance abuse services to TANF recipients.</p> <p>AHS Substance Abuse Committee is working on integrating substance abuse services and creating best practice throughout the Agency.</p> <p><b>[Response provided by DCF &amp; nongovernmental Council members]</b></p>