
**Report to
The Vermont Legislature**

Evaluation of Reach Up

In Accordance with 33 V.S.A. §1134(a)

**Submitted to: Governor
General Assembly**

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Commissioner
Department for Children and Families**

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Introduction

This report is submitted pursuant to 33 V.S.A § 1134 (a), which requires by January 31st of each year, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) report to the Governor and the General Assembly on progress during the past year in achieving the goals in 33 V.S.A. § 1002, § 1102, and § 1202. The following sections in this report correspond to the numerical paragraphs under subsection 1134 (a). Most data in this report, unless stated otherwise, are for the period October 1, 2014, through September 30, 2015 (federal fiscal year 2015). Data reported in Sections 3 and 4 (Reach Up leavers' participation in 3SquaresVT and Health Care Assistance) are for the 2015 state fiscal year July1, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

In previous years, pursuant to 33 V.S.A § 1134 (c), the Commissioner of the Department for Children and Families (DCF) reported to the House Committee on Human Services, the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, and House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on the cumulative months of Reach Up families' receipt of TANF-funded financial assistance. The last section of this report, entitled "Profile of Families with 60 or More Countable Months of Reach Up," now replaces this report. This section covers the number of families within this category, and the barriers they face. This section also discusses the number of families who became ineligible for Reach Up due to time limits; and for those who did not return to the program within 90 days, the types of income available to them.

Highlights and Changes in 2015

Reach Ahead

In May 2014, the General Assembly enacted changes to the Reach Ahead program. The section of the Act specific to these changes took effect on July 1, 2015. The Department implemented and formalized the revised Reach Ahead program on the same date. The changes extended the program from 12 to 24 months. It also altered the benefit level from \$100 in the first 6 months and \$50 in the second 6 months to \$50 in the first twelve months and \$5 in the second 12 months. The extension of Reach Ahead benefits for an additional 12 months allows a participant to receive a total of 24 months of support services, including 100 percent child care subsidy for that time period. The Department paid for these changes through caseload reduction savings in the Reach Up program. The Department grandfathered any Reach Ahead recipient who was receiving the \$100 benefit level as of the implementation date, and these recipients continued to receive that benefit level for the first six months of their eligibility period.

In addition to implementing legislative changes to the program, the Department also completed computer programming changes that allow the ACCESS system to transfer eligible participants from Reach Up to Reach Ahead automatically. This automation has already increased enrollment in Reach Ahead.

The extension of Reach Ahead benefits to 24 months and the automation of Reach Ahead enrollment have begun to address the "benefits cliff" by allowing participants to maintain additional resources when their Reach Up grant closes. In addition to this, the first months of these changes have resulted in increased Work Participation Rates for the state.

Earned Income Disregard Increase

On July 1, 2015, the Department implemented an increased earned income disregard allowing Reach Up participants to keep more of their Reach Up grant by counting less of their earned income in the benefit calculation. The earned income disregard changed from \$200 and 25 percent of the remainder, to \$250 and 25 percent of the remainder.

Reach Up and the 180 Day Temporary Absence Rule

The Reach Up program continues to maintain the temporary absence policy, which allows extended Reach Up eligibility for families when a parent or child is absent from the household for up to 180 days. Reach Up may stay open for up to 180 days if a parent must be out of the home to address substance abuse or mental health issues, or is hospitalized. Reach Up may also stay open for up to 180 days when children are absent for the same reason, or if they are placed in DCF custody or a similar custody arrangement, or incarcerated. In these types of absences, the extended Reach Up benefits allow families to maintain stable housing and give them the means to support themselves while they address issues necessary to return to the home.

Between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015, Reach Up approved 108 Temporary Absence cases. Only one of these 108 cases resulted from the temporary absence of the parent in the household. The remaining 107 temporary absences were the result of Family Services involvement. A total of 33 families (31 %) have been reunified during this one year period.

The rule's intent is to improve family stability thus increasing the family's chances of successful reunification in all situations covered by the rule. Reach Up program staff has collaborated closely with Family Services to address the needs of these families. Given the positive impact mental health and substance abuse treatment has on families' well-being, and likelihood of attaining self-sufficiency, allowing parents to address these issues while maintaining eligibility for assistance is crucial.

Independent Medical Review Team

In October 2014, Reach Up implemented a medical review process to independently review requests for medical deferments from work activities if the medical provider determined that the condition would last longer than 60 days.¹ The Department continues to contract two physicians to review these requests and make a decision whether to uphold the original treatment provider's recommendation, modify it, or deny the request for deferment. In FY15, 446 medical deferment requests were reviewed; the majority of those decisions resulted in a modified work requirement for a shorter period of time than was originally requested. Fourteen of the 446 cases were reviews of the same case. The following chart illustrates a breakdown of cases reviewed during the last fiscal year:

	Full Deferments	Denials	Modifications	Total
NIH²	34	1	17	52
Medical	129	14	251	394
Total	163	15	268	446

¹ The medical review process was implemented pursuant to 33 V.S.A. 1114(b)(5) and (d).

² "Needed in the Home" (NIH) to care for a sick or incapacitated family member

The majority of cases reviewed resulted in a modification of the work requirement. The department believes that a modification, rather than full deferment, is generally most appropriate and maintains the Reach Up philosophy that most individuals can participate in some meaningful way on their path towards self-sufficiency.

Assessment Using the Self Sufficiency Outcomes Matrix (SSOM)

In March 2015, case managers began using the SSOM as an ongoing assessment tool. The SSOM is used at the initial assessment, and then every six months thereafter. It may be updated more frequently if a significant change occurs. This assessment tool measures 13 different domains, and allows the case manager and participant to track progress together. In the long-term, the Department hopes to use data from this tool to determine how Reach Up has improved the lives of its participants.

Discontinuance of Vocational Rehabilitation Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

As of October 1, 2015, the MOU between DCF and the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation was discontinued. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) previously provided blended Reach Up case management and vocational rehabilitation services for Reach Up participants with longer term disabilities. Individuals with longer term disabilities are now served by the Economic Services Division (ESD) case managers for their Reach Up case management and, as needed, by VR for disability related employment support only.

Reach Up's Substance Abuse / Mental Health Initiative

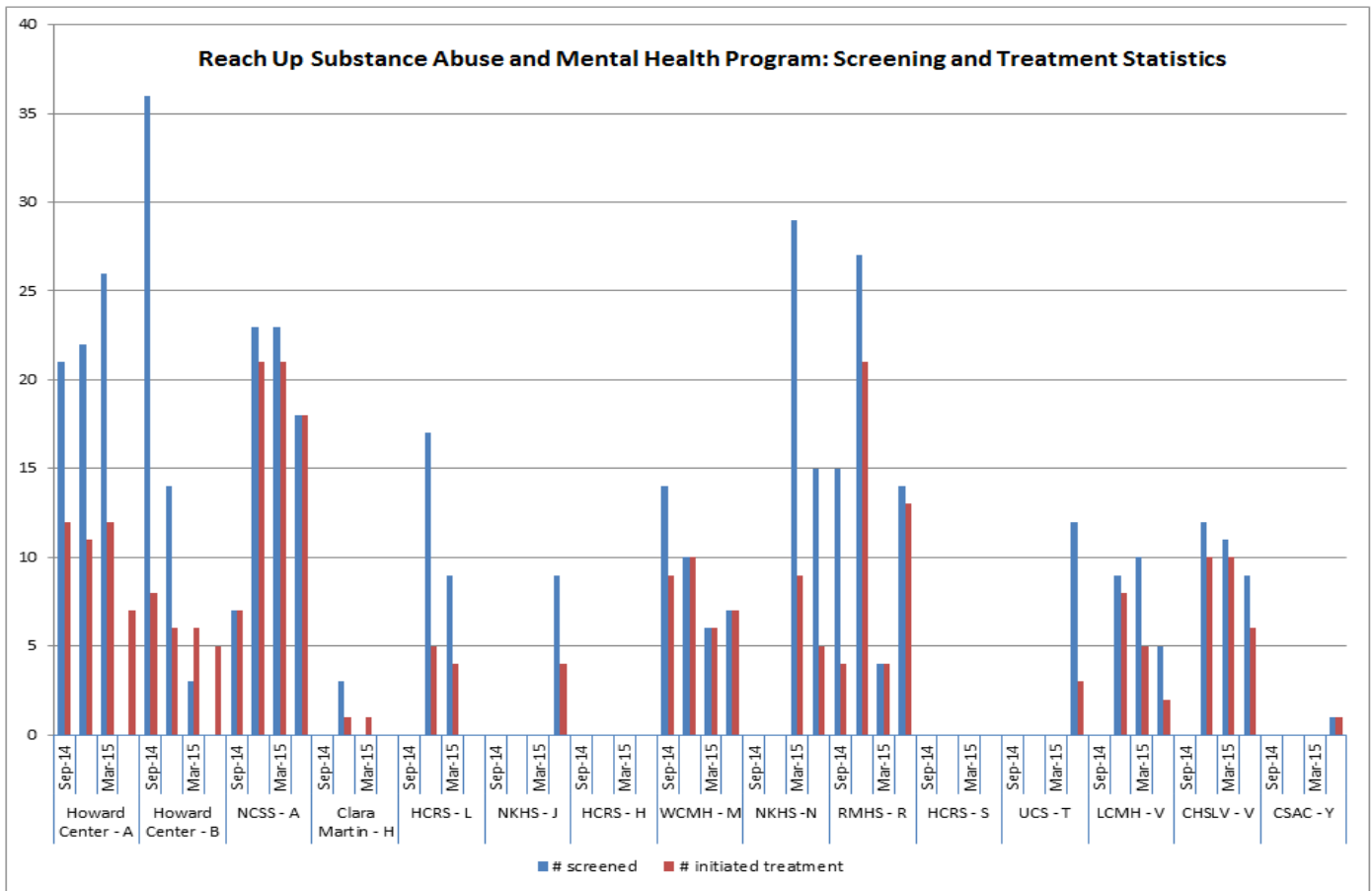
The Reach Up program, in partnership with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program (ADAP), continues to provide mental health and substance abuse services to address employment barriers and family well-being for Reach Up participants.

Reach Up added integrated substance abuse and mental health services for participants in the program beginning in November 2013. This initiative increased access to treatment and case management through the Designated Agency/Preferred Provider system. Each district provides these services through a substance abuse and mental health case manager and clinician, or a clinical case manager.

Data collected on this program shows that statewide, 64 percent of participants became engaged in treatment after being screened by our contracted staff at the Designated Agencies/Preferred Providers.³

³ Based upon data supplied by the Designated Agencies quarterly.

The graph below illustrates this data by district:



Finding qualified candidates to fill open positions continues to be a challenge throughout the state; however, most of the Designated Agencies/Preferred Providers work hard to fill the need with existing staff while recruiting.

Reach Up Substance Abuse/Mental Health Initiative staff and Lund Screeners contracted through Family Services have gathered together for a community of practice meeting held this fall. The Lund supervisor gave the Reach Up Substance Abuse and Mental Health program staff an introduction to the Screeners' work and the program goals. Statewide meetings such as this, in addition to local meetings, have continued to keep the line of communication open to address how they can collaborate around families served by both Economic Services and Family Services.

Reach Up and Domestic Violence (DV) Training

The Reach Up Program continues to provide training and awareness for staff regarding domestic violence issues. At least one Reach Up case manager in each district has assumed the role of a DV liaison and has taken additional training. In October 2014, eight of these staff began participating in the Vermont Victim Assistance Academy through the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services. An additional four staff enrolled this past year.

Reach Up and Family Housing Vouchers

Reach Up continues to work closely with programs that provide housing subsidies to marginally housed and homeless families. Reach Up partners with the Vermont State Housing Authority for

100 Family Unification Vouchers and provides support services to Reach Up participants who receive this subsidy. Reach Up also partners with the Vermont Rental Subsidy program; Reach Up families comprise 75 percent of the subsidy program. Reach Up provides a housing case manager in three districts focusing on the homeless and marginally housed.

Reach Up Partnership with Head Start

Reach Up and the Head Start Programs across the state have continued, through their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to develop systems and protocols to improve coordination and collaboration. Throughout the state, district offices have worked to make connections between Reach Up and Head Start, organizing team meetings and care coordination.

Reach Up Transportation

Reach Up is continuing its partnership with Good News Garage; 62 cars and 22,288 rides were provided to working families statewide through its Ready to Go Transportation Program.

Counting \$125 of a Parent's SSI income in the Reach Up Budget

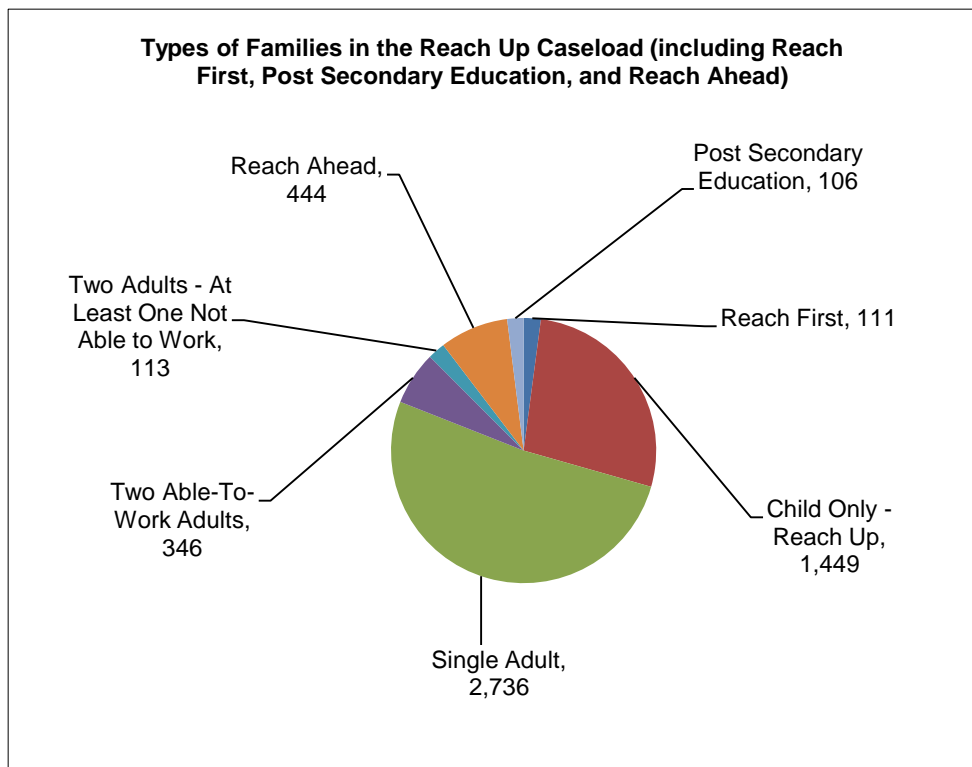
The 2015 legislative session passed legislation requiring the Department to count \$125 of a parent's SSI payment as unearned income when determining the family's monthly cash benefit. Economic Services implemented this law August 1, 2015. However, implementation was quickly suspended pending the outcome of a lawsuit brought against the state.

After several months of deliberation, the judge decided in favor of the Department and the SSI income rule was once again implemented. A total of 898 cases were impacted by this new rule. Although it is a dollar-for-dollar reduction in the families' monthly Reach Up benefit, the same family's 3SquaresVT benefit increases by a third of the reduction in the Reach Up grant due to the Reach Up reduction.

Section 1

Participant Barriers

Charts in this section illustrate the types of families and number of adults participating in the Reach Up program; the number of participants with barriers; ages of children in Reach Up families; and the number of participants with work requirement deferments. The figures below are the average monthly numbers for the period: October 2014 through September 2015.



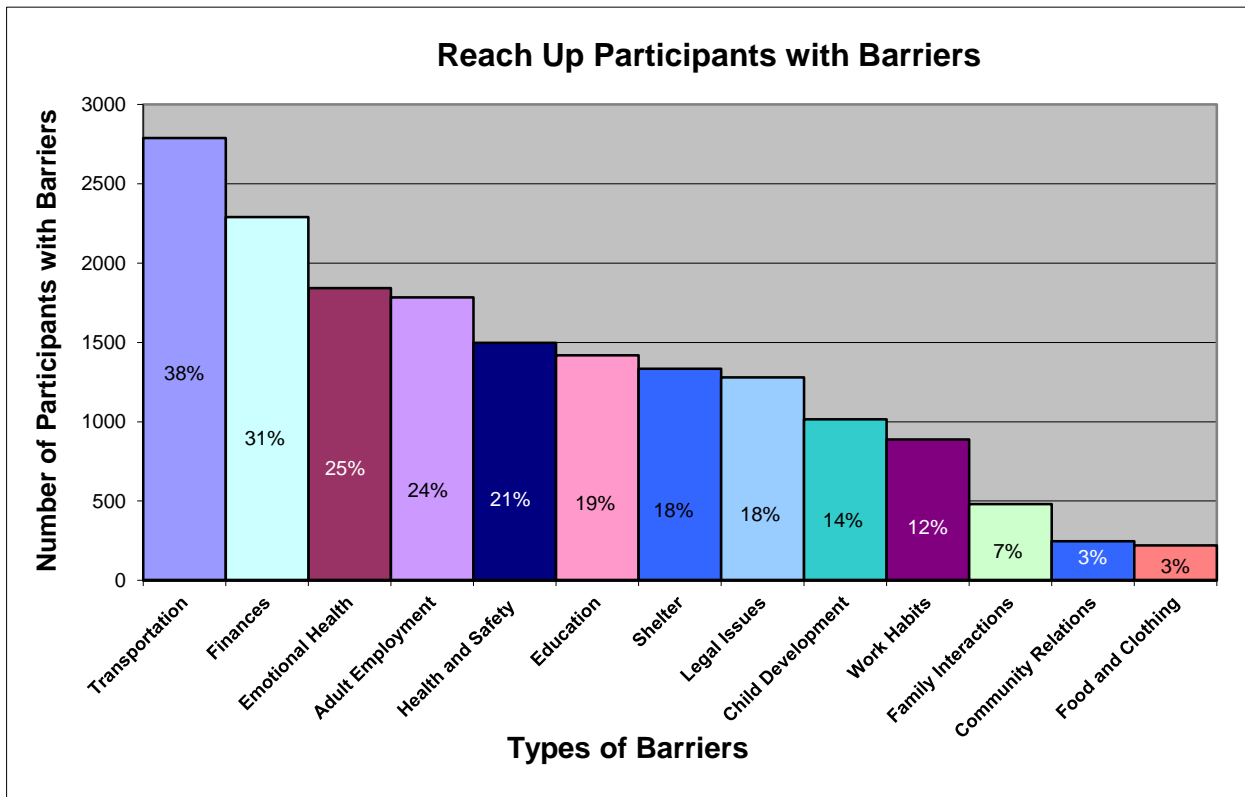
Average Number of Adults Participating in Reach Up Program

Family Type	Average Number of Adults Participating in Reach Up Each Month (does <u>not</u> include Reach First, Postsecondary Education Program, Reach Ahead adults)
Child Only (child's parent or caretaker is not on Reach Up)	0
Single Adult	2,736
Two Able-To-Work Adults	692
Two Adults, At Least One Not Able to Work	225
Total Adults	3,653

Reach Up Participants with Barriers

Reach Up case managers assess barriers to employment every six months (or more often if a significant change has occurred) using the Self Sufficiency Outcomes Matrix (SSOM). Strengths and challenges are assessed in 13 different domains. After the assessment is complete, the case manager enters the result of each domain into the Family Support Matrix in ACCESS, from which the following data is extracted.

The chart below illustrates the percentage of Reach Up participants assessed as having the specified barriers. During the period October 2014 through September 2015, case managers assessed 7,287 participants and found 17,085 barriers, an average of four barriers per participant.



Key to Domains:

Transportation – No drivers license or permit, no transportation, unreliable transportation, suspended license, owes fines, needs CRASH, needs car repairs, other

Finances – Severe debt problems, poor or no budgeting skills, bankruptcy, other

Emotional Health – Alcohol abuse, drug abuse, mental health issues, other

Adult Employment – Poor or no work history, no employment opportunities, other

Health and Safety – Physical health issues, lack of medical providers, needs dental work, other

Education – No diploma or GED, does not speak English, difficulty learning, lacks essential skills, learning disability, other

Shelter – Homeless/living in shelter, dangerous/inadequate housing, lack of affordable housing, owes back rent, other

Legal – Legal or court proceedings, legal court proceedings: divorce, history of criminal activity, other

Child Development – Serious developmental delays, serious behavioral problems, no child care available, disabled child, child has IEP, other

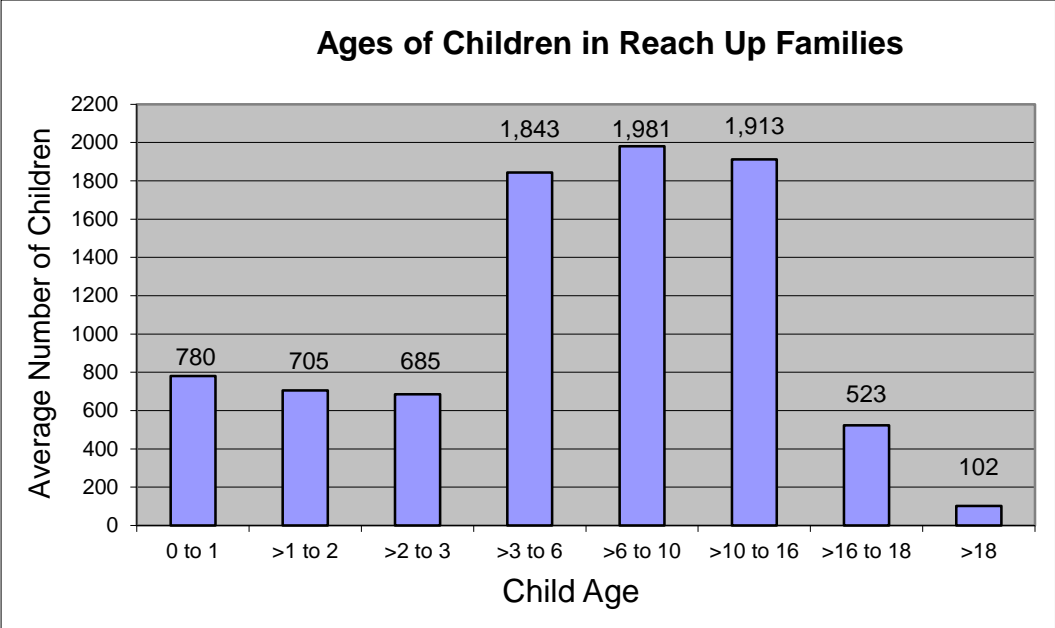
Work Habits – Lacks hard skills, lacks soft skills, other

Family Interactions – Efforts being sabotaged, multiple agency involvement, family make-up frequently changing, frequent conflicts amount family, domestic violence, needed in home, other

Community Relations – Poor relationships with neighbors, isolated from community/services, other

Food and Clothing – Inadequate clothing, inadequate nutrition, other

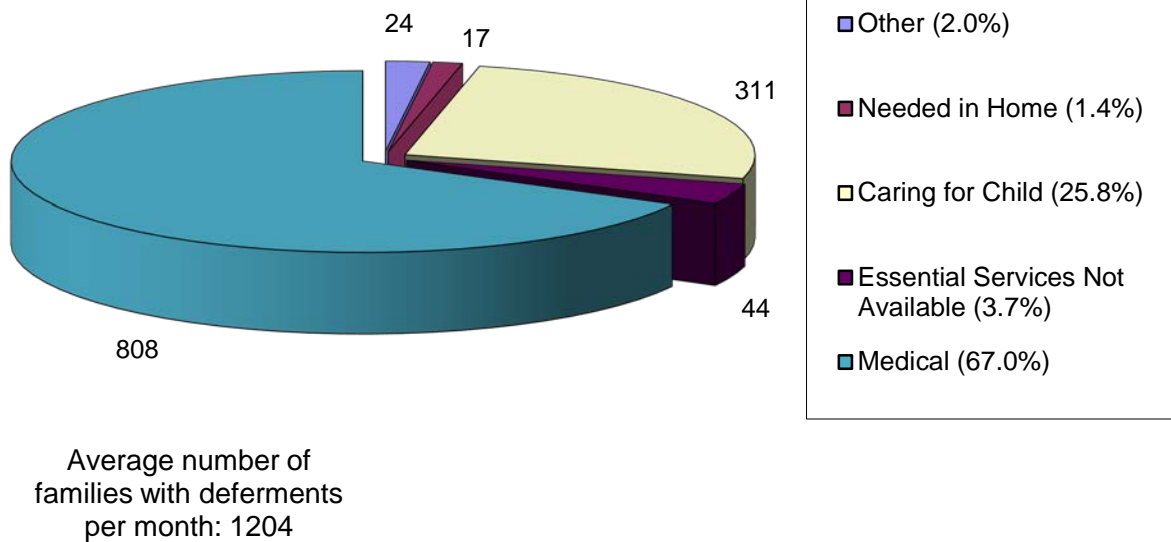
Reach Up provides incentives and support services designed to help families overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. Support services are services needed to improve the participant’s prospects for employment and job retention. The need for support services is determined during assessment (and reassessment) as well as during the creation and modification of the Family Development Plan. The wide range of support services that Reach Up provides includes payment for child care and transportation. Despite availability of transportation through contracted agencies such as Good News Garage, transportation remains Reach Up’s single major barrier to employment.



The above chart illustrates the ages of a monthly average of 8,532 children who received assistance from October 2014 through September 2015. Approximately 25 percent are under age three, 22 percent are between the ages of three and six, and 53 percent are over six.

The deferment chart below illustrates that an average of 311 participants per month received a deferment from their work requirement to care for a child under the age of two.

Reach Up Families with Deferments



A deferment is a temporary postponement of the full work requirement. A deferred participant must have a Family Development Plan with an employment goal and participate in activities that address the reason for the deferment; ultimately leading to the achievement of the employment goal. Consistent with the Department’s strength-based approach to case management, case managers modify rather than defer the number of work requirement hours for participants who are able to work at least ten hours per week. Figures in the chart above represent the deferment status of adults with a work requirement.

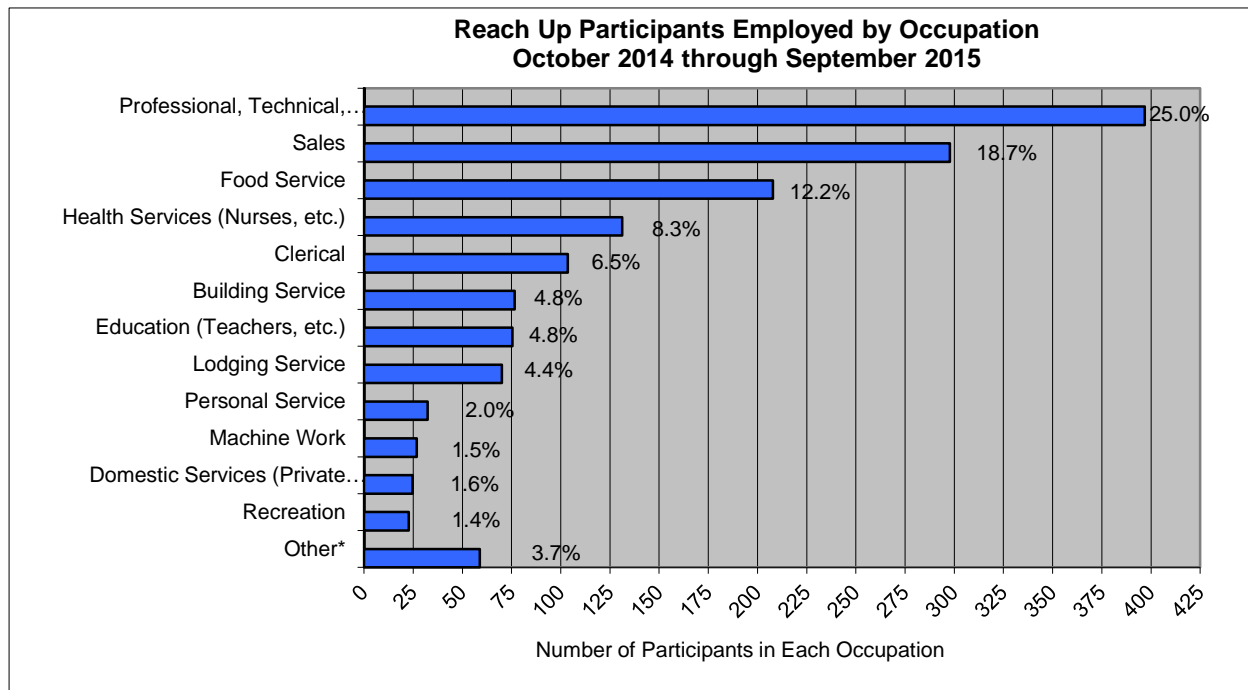
Section 2 Participant Outcomes

Charts in this section illustrate monthly averages of Reach Up participants’ work by occupations, industries, and wages based on data from October 2014 through September 2015. It does not include the Postsecondary Education program. One chart illustrates the number of families that moved off assistance and achieved better outcomes for their children under the Reach Up program. Information supporting good outcomes for children is also represented in Section 1 by the low number of barriers related to child well-being and the high number of parents requesting deferments to take care of children.

Some working participants do not earn enough to be ineligible for Reach Up, and some of these participants may be combining education with work to guarantee a better job when they leave Reach Up.

Families Combine Reach Up with Work

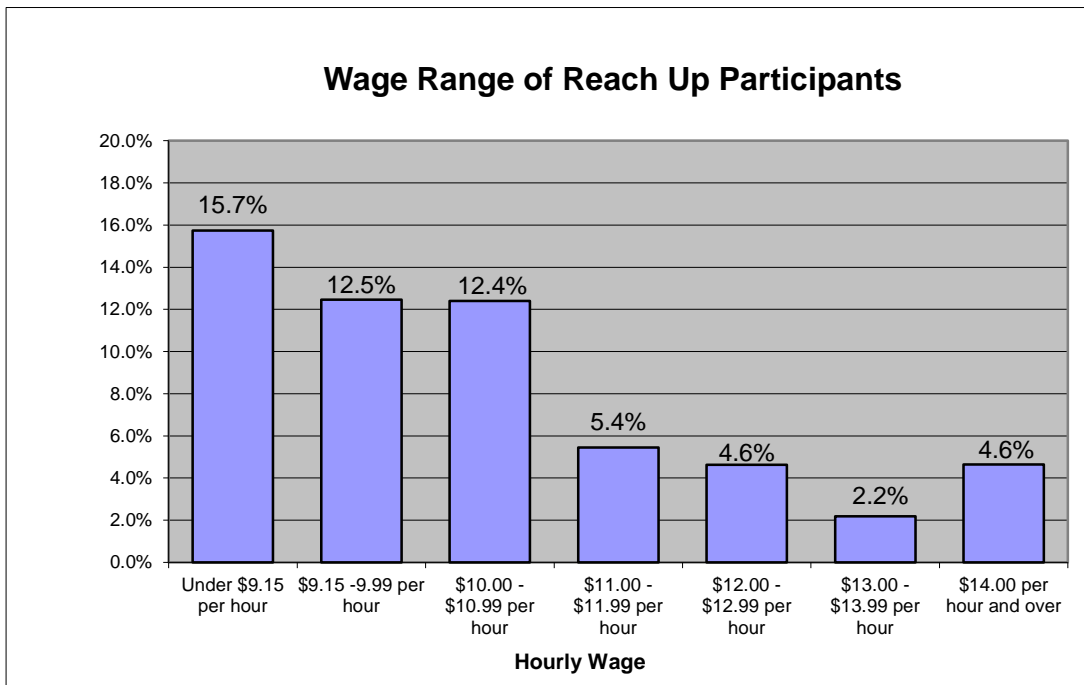
The charts below illustrate occupations of an average of 1,524 participants who combined Reach Up with work each month.



Reach Up Participants Employed By Occupation October 2014 through September 2015		
Occupation	Average Number of Participants	Percentage in Each Occupation
Other*	59	3.7%
Recreation	23	1.4%
Domestic Services (Private Homes)	25	1.6%
Machine Work	27	1.5%
Personal Service	32	2.0%
Lodging Service	70	4.4%
Education (Teachers, etc.)	76	4.8%
Building Service	77	4.8%
Clerical	104	6.5%
Health Services (Nurses, etc.)	131	8.3%
Food Service	208	13.1%
Sales	298	18.7%
Professional, Technical, Managerial	397	25.0%
Total Participants Employed	1,524	
<i>* Each of the occupations consolidated in the "Other" category employed less than 1% of the participants.</i>		

Reach Up Participants Employed By Industry October 2014 through September 2015		
Industry	Percentage in Each Industry	Average Number of Participants
Services	46.9%	745
Retail Trade	13.2%	210
Transportation & Public Utilities	9.6%	152
Manufacturing	2.7%	44
Construction	1.0%	15
Wholesale Trade	0.7%	11
Agric/Forestry/Fishing/Mining	0.7%	10
Government	0.6%	10
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	0.2%	3
Other	24.4%	388
Total Participants Employed		1588

**The “Other” category in these charts includes participants whose jobs do not fit into a specified category; those who are in supported work placements and not earning a wage; and those in occupations not otherwise listed that employ less than one percent of the participants.*



The above chart illustrates the percentage of employed Reach Up participants in each wage range. It does not include newly employed and self-employed adults whose earnings have yet to be verified, or adults in supported work placements who are not earning wages. Participants starting self-employment may also have net income equivalent to less than \$9.15 per hour, Vermont’s 2015 minimum wage.

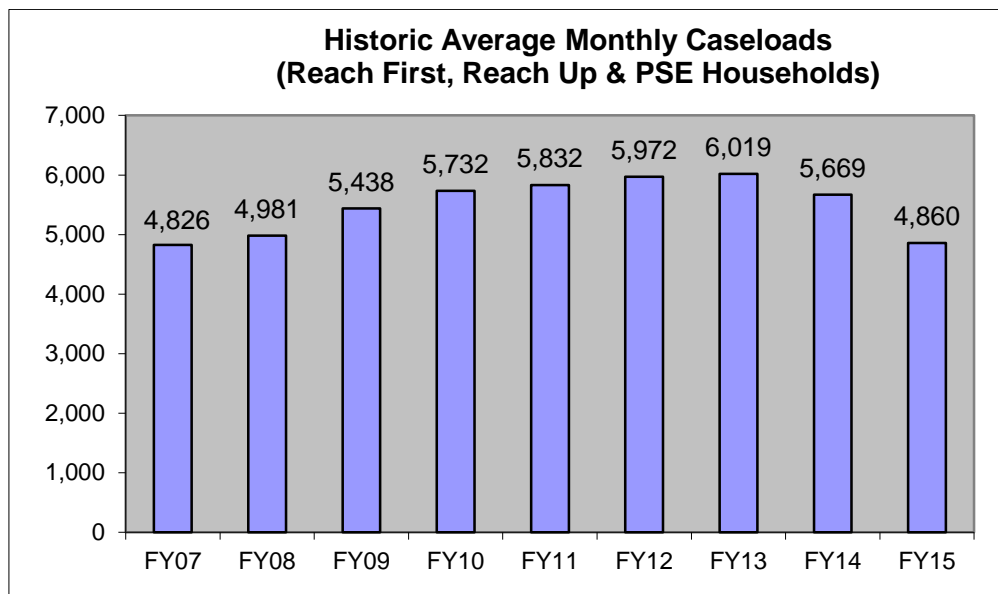
Reach Up Participants By Wage Range October 2014 through September 2015		
Wage	Percentage in Wage Range	Average Number of Participants
Under \$9.15 per hour	15.7%	250
\$9.15 -9.99 per hour	12.5%	198
\$10.00 - \$10.99 per hour	12.4%	197
\$11.00 - \$11.99 per hour	5.4%	87
\$12.00 - \$12.99 per hour	4.6%	74
\$13.00 - \$13.99 per hour	2.2%	35
\$14.00 per hour and over	4.6%	74
Unknown	42.4%	673
Total Participants Employed		1,588

Adults Participate in Training and Education Programs

Participants who are not job ready are supported in short-term work, training, and education placements. Participants who need work experience may be placed in supported placements where they do not earn wages; these participants are included in the “unknown” categories in the occupation, industry, and wage tables above.

Historic Caseloads

When Vermont’s TANF Reauthorization waiver expired on July 1, 2001, the state was required to comply with TANF Reauthorization regulations. At that time there were 5,500 families on assistance. Data in the following chart represents the average monthly number of families for each state fiscal year. Caseload increases between state fiscal years 2007 and 2013 reflect the national economic recession of that time period. Since 2013, caseloads have steadily declined each year. This is most likely due, primarily, to improved economic conditions. A portion of the decline can also be attributed to families who chose to no longer participate after Reach Up time limits were implemented in May 2014.



Section 3

3SquaresVT Participation of Households Who Have Left Reach Up During the Last Fiscal Year

This chart illustrates 3SquaresVT participation for individuals who left Reach Up in state fiscal year 2015. An average of 3,251 individuals left Reach Up each quarter, and an average of 2,658 (82 %) of these families were still off Reach Up four months later. When they left Reach Up, 90 percent of these families were receiving 3SquaresVT benefits; four months later 68 percent still received 3SquaresVT.

Reach Up Leavers' Participation in Food Stamps -- Fiscal Year 2015					
	Quarter Ending Sep '14	Quarter Ending Dec '14	Quarter Ending Mar '15	Quarter Ending Jun '15	Average
1. Total number of individuals who left Reach Up	3,418	3,265	3,226	3,095	3,251
2. Those in #1 who were not receiving RU in the 4th month after leaving RU	2,831 83%	2,580 79%	2,658 82%	2,564 83%	2,658 82%
3. Those in #2 who were enrolled in food stamps at the time of leaving RU	2,581 91%	2,323 90%	2,384 90%	2,273 89%	2,390 90%
4. Those in #3 who were also enrolled in food stamps in the 4th month after leaving RU	1,773 69%	1,550 67%	1,642 69%	1,504 66%	1,617 68%

Section 4

Health Care Program Enrollment of Individuals Who Have Left Reach Up During the Last Fiscal Year

Vermont is a leader in providing health care assistance to children and families. While a family of three loses eligibility for Reach Up when their income reaches approximately \$13,200 a year, the family will be eligible for Transitional Medical Assistance (TMA) regardless of the family's increased earnings. TMA extends a family's Medicaid eligibility for up to 12 months.⁴

⁴ Health Benefits Eligibility and Enrollment rule § 7.03(a)(6)(i).

Reach Up Leavers' Participation in Medicaid and Dr. Dynasaur-- Fiscal Year 2015					
	Quarter Ending Sep '14	Quarter Ending Dec '14	Quarter Ending Mar '15	Quarter Ending Jun '15	Average
1. Total number of individuals who left Reach Up	3,418	3,265	3,226	3,095	3,251
2. Those in #1 who were not receiving RU in the 4th month after leaving RU	2,831 83%	2,580 79%	2,658 82%	2,564 83%	2,658.25 82%
3. Those in #2 who were enrolled in medical assistance at the time of leaving RU	1,785 63%	1,542 60%	1,533 58%	1,420 55%	1,570 59%
4. Those in #3 who were also enrolled in medical assistance in the 4th month after leaving RU	1,567 88%	1,356 88%	1,404 92%	1,247 88%	1,394 89%

Section 5

Summary of Interim and Final Reports by Contractors

Leslie Black-Plumeau, an independent contractor with the Department, provides several reports to ESD evaluating Reach Up “leavers,” Reach Ahead “leavers,” and outcomes from the newly established assessment practice using the SSOM.

One report was submitted in FY’15 and is available upon request: “Leaving Reach Up: How did the experiences of Vermont’s 2013 welfare leavers compare to earlier leavers?”

The two additional reports mentioned above will be available in FY’16.

Section 6

Work Participation Rates and the Caseload Reduction Credit

States must submit data on all TANF recipients quarterly to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF). ACF computes each state’s monthly work participation rates for two categories: all families and families with two parents in the Reach Up assistance group. They then average the rates for 12 months to calculate the state’s overall work participation rate for the federal fiscal year. States are required to meet a 50 percent all-family rate and a 90 percent two-parent family rate.

Section 407(b)(3) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), provides for an adjustment to a state’s fiscal year work participation rate based on declines in the state’s caseload the prior Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). This adjustment to the work participation rate is called the state’s caseload reduction credit (CRC). The CRC gives states credit based on the actual

reduction in the caseload between the statutory base-year and the comparison-year. The DRA changed the base-year of the calculation from 1995 to 2005.

The chart below illustrates Vermont’s estimated participation rates as calculated, but not yet finalized, by ACF.

TANF Work Participation Rates Federal Fiscal Year 2015
Calculated by ACF

	All Families	2-Parent Families
1 st quarter	44.1%	48.9%
2 nd quarter	41.8%	44.7%
3 rd quarter	44.4%	51.3%
4 th quarter	45.3%	57.3%
Average	43.9%	50.6%

Caseload Reduction Credit (CRC)

	All Families	2-Parent Families
Rate submitted to ACF ⁵	5.2%	0.0%

Applying the Administration for Children & Families CRC method to the participation rates results in a 49.1 percent all-families rate and a 50.6 percent two-parent families rate.

Section 7

Basic Needs, Housing Allowances, and Maximum Grants

Basic Needs and Housing Allowances

The department calculates a basic needs standard that includes certain requirements considered basic to all individuals. These needs include food, shelter, clothing, fuel, utilities, personal incidentals, core services, and special needs. This standard of combined basic needs increases according to household size, from \$475 for a household of one to \$1,769 for a household of eight. Each year, the department reports the current basic needs’ standards and budget adjusted to reflect an annual cost-of-living increase. The department makes the annual cost-of-living increase calculation by running the basic needs standards and housing allowances through a computer program that recalculates them based on changes in the consumer price index (CPI) and housing costs reported by families participating in the Reach Up program living inside and outside Chittenden County. The revised needs’ standards and housing allowances are run through a simulation of the Reach Up population to estimate the fiscal impact of making cost-of-living adjustments. The simulation is run against the amount budgeted for Reach Up to determine the percentage of total needs that the department can pay with existing funds. Consistent with 33 V.S.A. §101(4), the department currently pays 49.6 percent of total needs determined in 2004.

⁵ The caseload reduction rates are the rates submitted to ACF in December 2014 using ACF’s methodology. Vermont is waiting for confirmation of the caseload reduction rates.

The charts below illustrate the current basic needs for families of one to four members, basic needs if adjusted in December 2015 for the cost-of-living increase, current housing costs, and housing costs if adjusted.

Basic Needs and Housing Allowance		
Family Size	Existing Basic Needs (based on calculation in 3/1/04)	Basic needs if adjusted to annual cost-of-living increase (12/1/15)
1	\$475	\$592
2	\$680	\$848
3	\$891	\$1,113
4	\$1,064	\$1,331
5	\$1,247	\$1,560
6	\$1,372	\$1,716
7	\$1,589	\$1,984
8	\$1,769	\$2,213
Each additional person	\$170	\$213

Housing Allowances	Existing Housing Allowance (based on 10/1/01)	Housing allowance if adjusted to annual median cost (12/1/15)
Chittenden County	\$450	\$675
Outside Chittenden County	\$400	\$572

**based on what clients report they pay for housing.*

Current Maximum Grants

The chart below illustrates maximum grants for families of one to four members. Grants in Chittenden County are higher due to a history of higher shelter costs and a higher housing allowance. All families with out-of-pocket shelter costs in excess of maximum allowances may receive up to \$45 more in their grant as a special needs housing allowance.

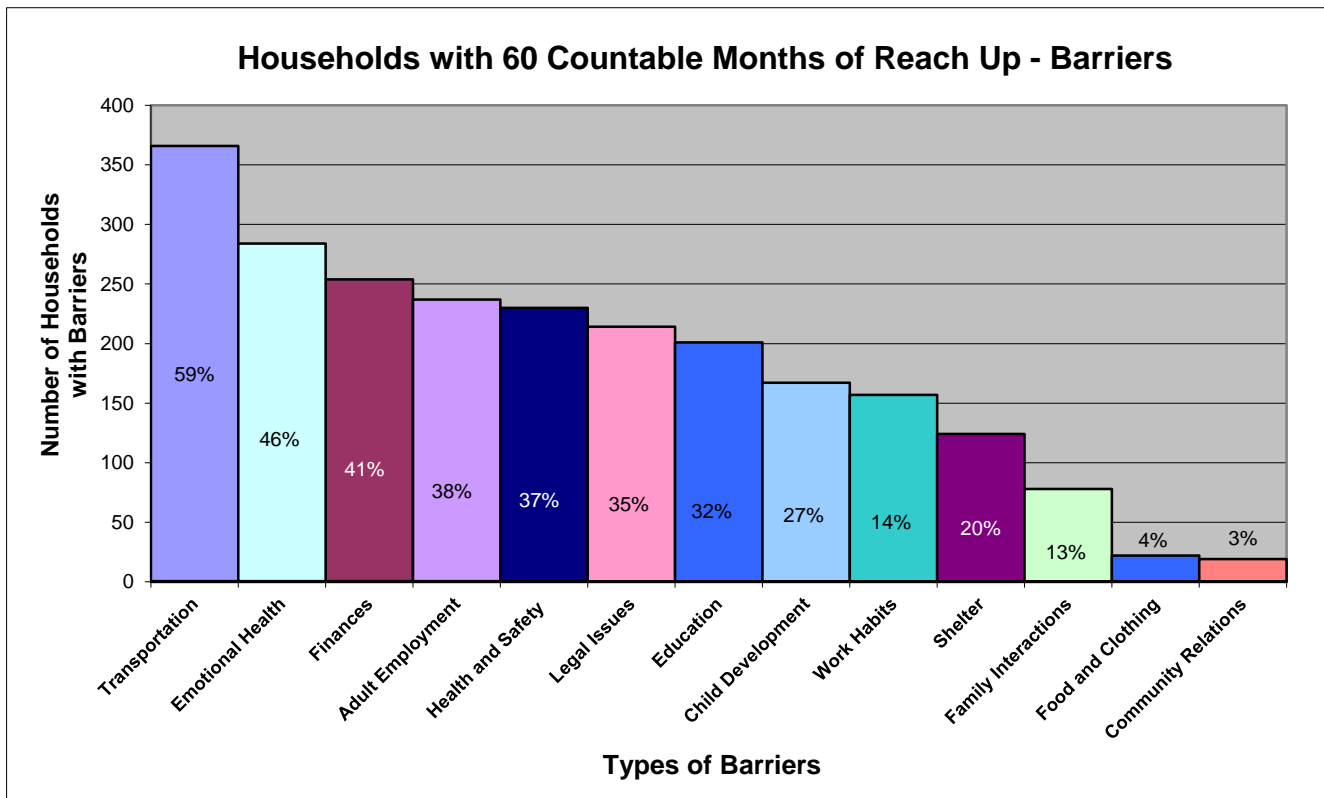
Family Size	Outside Chittenden County	Chittenden County
1	\$434	\$458
2	\$535	\$560
3	\$640	\$665
4	\$726	\$750

Section 8

Profile of Families with 60 Countable Months of Reach Up

During 12 months of the last fiscal year, an average 620 cases were at their 60 month limit; the monthly average of cases at the 60 month limit was 315. The 620 families had a total of 2,353 barriers. This average of 3.8 barriers per household is very close to the average number of barriers (4) in the total Reach Up population.

The most significant barrier in 60 month limit population is transportation, with 59 percent of these families presenting problems with transportation. This is notably higher than the overall Reach Up population where 38 percent report transportation as a barrier to employment.



An additional challenge in working with this population is the limited activities they are permitted to participate in to retain their grant. In order to continue receiving Reach Up after 60 countable months, participants who are not deferred must be engaged in either a Community Service Program (CSP) or employment. In some cases the CSP is appropriate, and participants are successfully engaged. However in other cases, different activities to help participants reach self-sufficiency may be more appropriate such as job search, job readiness activities, and Vocational Education.

In FFY'15 there were a total of 354 families that were found ineligible for Reach Up due to the time limits. Of those 354 families, 210 were still not receiving Reach Up assistance within 90 days of termination.

Of the 210 families not receiving Reach Up after 90 days of their termination:

- 170 (81 percent) were receiving 3SquaresVT
- 22 (10 percent) received General Assistance. Nine received temporary housing, four received rental assistance, six received dental assistance, and three received Vermont Rental Subsidy
- 95 (45 percent) had other available income. Thirty-three had earned income, and 82 had unearned income (e.g. SSI, SSDI, Unemployment Insurance, child support, etc.)

Conclusion

The Reach Up program continues to make program improvements and work collaboratively with other divisions. The work that is done is in line with the main goals of the program. Staff continually strives to serve participants respectfully and compassionately by providing the resources they need to work towards self-sufficiency.

The last few years have seen a caseload decline in the Reach Up program however; the barriers to employment Reach Up participants face are still quite significant. Enhancements to the program, such as the addition of substance abuse/mental health counselors and the use of the SSOM for assessments, augment the efforts to reduce barriers for participants.