

## ACCPSF Recommendations

### A. *Introductory Statement of Purpose & Authority*

1. The Advisory Council on Child Poverty and Strengthening Families recognizes that reducing childhood poverty implies reducing family poverty, that health and the effects of poverty are inextricably connected, and that childhood and adult trauma are major contributing factors to poverty. No one entity, including government, has the sole responsibility for achieving results in reducing poverty and its lasting impacts. Government should be the catalyst for bringing all stakeholders – providers, schools, communities, faith groups, and governmental agencies - together to develop better systems to support children and families. The Council looks for opportunities to integrate Agency of Human Services programs in support of individual children and families to address the root causes of poverty. Families need housing, food, and clothing to become stable, as well as health care, education, child care, and economic opportunity to escape poverty and become economically mobile and independent. Providing only one, or even several, of these things will not eliminate poverty or sustain reduction.
2. The Council was created to exercise authority in two prongs. First, the Council is working to identify and examine structural and other issues in Vermont that lead to families living in poverty and create conditions that prevent families from moving out of poverty. Second, the Council is working to advance policies that promote financial stability and asset building, support safety nets for families with low income, and mitigate the effects of childhood poverty.

### B. Recommendations

#### 1. *Child Care*

- **Support increasing child care provider reimbursement rates**
- **Support Expanding Workforce Incentives with funding for child care provider educational supports**

#### 2. *After-school and Summer Programs*

- **Support investment in after-school and summer programs**

#### 3. *Affordable Housing*

- **Support continued capital investments to reduce the shortage of affordable housing**

#### 4. *Economic Empowerment*

- **Support increasing the minimum wage and adjust eligibility to critical benefit programs as needed (Child Care Financial Assistance)**
- **Express support for passage of paid family leave legislation**
- **Support increased financial assistance for micro-businesses and Individual Development Accounts (Vermont matched savings programs)**
- **Support investment in workforce training and financial literacy education**
- **Support transportation related public initiatives, including increasing public transportation options, incentivizing the use**

**of efficient vehicles, and providing license fee and fine remediation assistance**

- **Support increases for Reach up financial assistance to fund households at one hundred percent of their basic needs based on the current cost of living, with automatic increases for inflation.**
- **Support the reversal of the reduction in Reach Up grant amounts for households where an adult is receiving Social Security Insurance (SSI)**

5. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health*

- **Support and monitor the implementation of the Agency of Human Services' Act 43 Childhood Trauma Response Plan**
- **Express support for parent child centers and their role in providing resilience building services**

C. Additional Areas of Interest

1. Child care

- Provide guidance on formation of new State leadership team for Strengthening Families/ Building Bright Futures
- Support integration and connection of Strengthening Families framework into higher education curriculum across multiple disciplines, including education, social work, child care, and medicine
- Support afterschool, vacation, and summer programs, including training and funding of programs
- Examine whether and how services and programs follow kids in transition from pre-K to kindergarten and beyond
- Support to fully fund Reach Up based on current (not 2004) cost of living numbers
- Identify and address gaps in services currently filled by schools – example, food insecurity during school breaks where students are relying on schools for meals
- Support professional development for educators – pre-k staff currently receive training regarding ACEs and trauma/ resiliency – expand this training to all educators

2. Affordable Housing

- Highlight other recommendations from Roadmap to Ending Homelessness in Vermont, including adding additional support services, providing more supportive housing, and using vouchers to address rent costs. Address need for additional staff to coordinate and execute programs using federal funds in order to fully utilize available resources
- Provide assistance through all stages of rental relationship – example, providing support to pay back rent to avoid eviction, providing supportive housing

- Fully fund VHCB and ensure transfer tax funds designated for housing programs are appropriated for that purpose
  - Address growth of housing instability, where households/ families are not homeless but not living in long-term, permanent housing – couchsurfing, out of pocket motel stays, short rentals, etc.
  - Address long lengths of stay in homeless shelters
3. Economic Empowerment
- Highlight new calculator provided for families to understand how benefits may change in order to reduce fear regarding loss of benefits and prevent fear-based decision making
  - Address the benefit cliff for minimum wage issue
  - Support the two-generation approach from Whole Families Approach to Jobs