

2018 Recommendations of the Advisory Council on Child Poverty and Strengthening Families

Recommendation	Legislative Action?
<p>The Advisory Council recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) increasing child care provider reimbursement rates within the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) to the most current available market rates; (b) supporting an expansion of workforce incentives, including educational supports for child care providers; and (c) expanding eligibility within the Child Care Financial Assistance Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) In FY20, Act 72 aligned rates of reimbursement for preschool and school age children to 2014 market rates and the rates of reimbursement for infants and toddlers to the 2017 market rates. (b) Act 72 appropriated \$300,000 for grants dedicated for hiring or retention bonuses or for tuition assistance for continuing education for child care professionals employed at privately-operated center-based programs or family child care homes. (c) In FY20, Act 72 adjusted the sliding fee scale to ensure families whose gross income is between 100 and 300% of the current federal poverty guidelines receive between 99 and 10% of the available financial assistance benefit. <p>* Act 72 requires that CCFAP utilize current federal poverty guidelines. **Also investment for modernization of the Bright Futures Information System.</p>
<p>The Advisory Council recommends increasing investments in afterschool and summer programs to expand high quality programs and increase statewide access.</p>	<p>Eligible families may use CCFAP benefit toward afterschool programming.</p>

<p>The Advisory Council recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) increasing capital investments to reduce the shortage of affordable housing in Vermont, for example by providing full statutory funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board;(b) increasing rental assistance and other housing related financial supports, for example increasing funding for the Vermont Rental Subsidy and Housing Opportunity Grant Program; and(c) expanding investments in support services to increase housing retention for families, for example by increasing funding for Family Supportive Housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) With regard to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board’s budget, there was a \$1m addition in the amount of programmatic funds compared to the previous year, but available capital funding was lowered by a similar amount.(b) The General Assistance program did spend more than budgeted for FY19 emergency housing and emergency rental assistance, which will require review in budget adjustment and in the FY21 budget. Aside from emergency assistance, there was little base change in the budget.(c) Act 72 contains a one-time appropriation for supportive housing via SASH, which benefits some families. Also, Act 72 established a Specialized Housing Voucher working group, which is responsible for submitting a report by Nov. 1, 2019.
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<p>The Advisory Council recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) increasing the minimum wage in Vermont alongside corresponding adjustments in benefits eligibility to avoid a net loss to beneficiaries; (b) the adoption of paid family and medical leave legislation; (c) increasing funding for economic programs that create jobs and build savings and assets, for example, the Micro-Business Development Program and the Vermont Matched Savings Program (formerly Individual Development Account); (d) investing in workforce training and financial literacy education; (e) supporting transportation-related public initiatives, including increasing public transportation options, increasing access to reliable and affordable vehicles, and providing license fee and fine remediation assistance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) S.23: The Senate Proposal of Amendment to the House Proposal of Amendment (available here) would increase the minimum wage to \$12.20 by 2021. (b) H.107: The Senate proposal on paid family leave (available here) would provide eligible employees with a total of up to 12 weeks of Family and Medical Leave Insurance benefits, which could be used for up to 12 weeks of bonding leave, up to 8 weeks of leave to care for a sick family member, and, for employees who elect to obtain coverage for their own illness, up to 6 weeks of leave for the employee's own illness. The benefits would replace 90% of the first \$530 of the employee's weekly wages, and 55% of any wages above that amount up to a maximum benefit of \$964/week. (c) Maintenance of base for IDAs and microbusinesses of \$100,000 through one-time funding. (d) Act 80 includes requirements pertaining to education and training and remote workers. Act 72 includes investments for the child care workforce (see above). (e) Act 59 establishes an emissions repair program and provides incentives to VT households with low and moderate income at or below 160 percent of the State's prior five-year average Median Household Income (MHI) level for electric vehicle purchases. Other initiatives include continued examination of a commuter rail between Montpelier and Burlington. Also H.249 (as passed by the House) proposes to establish a pilot to cover the costs of the motor vehicle sales and use tax and the registration
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<p>(f) increasing Reach Up financial assistance for households to one hundred percent of their basic needs based on the current cost of living, with automatic increases for inflation; and</p> <p>(g) reversing the reduction in Reach Up grant amounts for households where an adult with a disability is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).</p>	<p>fee for the first year of car ownership for Reach Up and Reach Ahead participants.</p> <p>(f) Act 72 increases the base of the Reach Up program by \$2.3m for the purpose of enhancing benefit levels. (This includes \$400,000 for (g) below).</p> <p>(g) Act 72 reduced from \$115 to \$77, the amount of SSI payment received by a parent that counts toward the determination of the amount of the family’s financial assistance grant.</p>
<p>The Advisory Council recommends that the committees of jurisdiction:</p> <p>(a) support and monitor the implementation of the Agency of Human Services’ Act 43 Childhood Trauma Response Plan; and</p> <p>(b) support increased funding for parent child centers and their two-generation approach supporting the five Protective Factors.</p>	<p>(a) The House Committee on Human Services and Senate Committee on Health and Welfare reviewed the Agency of Human Services’ Act 43 Childhood Adversity Response Plan.</p> <p>(b) In FY20, \$1m was appropriated to the parent child centers for one-time infrastructure improvements. There was also an increase in the base of the master grant by \$1.3m, but a \$1.6m reduction in Reach Up case management services previously utilized by the State.</p>

Other related legislative actions:

- Restoration of CIS funding
- Passage of Act 148, an act relating to adopting protections against housing discrimination for victims of domestic and sexual violence
- Passage of Act 37, an act relating to repealing the statute of limitations for civil actions based on childhood sexual abuse
- Funding to increase payments to foster parents