

2019 Public Hearing

February 25, 2019 – Longfellow School Building, Rutland, VT

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

I'm Lori Pinsonneault and I am here from Sunrise Family Resource Center in Bennington— one of Vermont's 15 Parent Child Centers. Parent Child Centers help families make sure children get off to a healthy start. Our services include an on-site early childhood program, home visits to families with young children, playgroups, parent education, parent support, information and referral -and much more. Our work is all about *prevention* and we support Vermont's most vulnerable families with wrap around services.

Currently there are Reach up case managers housed at Parent Child Centers. (Reach up is a program that helps eligible parents *gain job skills and find work so they can support their children.*) At Sunrise, a parent on Reach up would be supported in many ways and in one place. Their child might be in our child care program while they are enrolled in our on-site high school or maybe attending our job club. On staff is our Reach up case manager supporting these parents. The manager often has lunch with them at our *Opportunities* café – which offers a wonderful chance to build relationships. The manager can also meet a parent at the child care program (or at job club or at our high school building) if need be – this is very helpful when there are missed appointments -which happens when working with these young parents who often times are struggling with mental health issues, substance dependence, domestic violence, trauma, and homelessness. Sunrise also has an on-site housing program.

On-site Reach up case managers are crucial to our integrated, multi-generational approach and by holding these Reach up contracts, Parent Child Centers have access to data, partnerships with local state workers, incentive dollars and common training.

Vermont's Parent Child Centers are the answer to helping the neediest families get support to build resiliency in moving toward self-sufficiency. Reach up case managers and the work of Children's Integrated Services are keys to family success. Funding for these programs is critical.

In summary I am asking two things:

- I ask that the Reach up case manager positions remain at Vermont's Parent Child Centers to continue their vital work with families.
- And I ask that the Parent Child Centers, which have been level funded for more than 20 years, receive a much needed increase to their Master Grants.

Thank you for your hard work in these tough budget times.

Lori

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It is nice to have case management at Sunrise because it is closer to my house when I don't have transportation. Also, I go to school there, and I can meet with my worker during school hours. My son is in the Early Childhood Center, and I can check on him. So, I don't have to make various trips to different places. It would make life ten times harder for a lot of us to move our case manager.

---S.T.

I am at school from 9-3 and planning on graduating in the spring. With our reach up worker at Sunrise we don't have to travel far. I can't walk to the State Office Building with two small children in the freezing cold. It's really nice to be able to pop our heads in and just ask the questions we have to ask.

---M.R.