

My name is Steven Harrington and I serve as the senior case manager for the Vermont Children and Families Community Response (VCFCR) program at the Rutland County Parent Child Center. On behalf of the families we work with and then families we can work with, I urge legislators to

- * increase the PCC Master Grant by \$1.5 million
- * allocate a one-time investment of \$1.5 million so PCCs can pay for needed projects.
- * AND please do not allow administration to end the PCC Reach Up Case Management Contracts or end funding for the VCFCR pilot.

A critical part of our work is navigational: we help families make sure the right connections are made and that critical connections aren't missed - because when this doesn't happen good energy and resources are wasted and negative downward spirals can result, with further costs. We are very palpably helping people change course for the better, at 30% less cost than equivalent state services and saving the state an additional substantial amount of money in reduced need for services.

Here is an example of how this works:

We've been working with a young family with a 2-yr-old child and the mother pregnant but with challenging health conditions and at high-risk for a difficult labor, who were living in a tent, having been evicted after the mother's job was lost due to a business closure. They recently welcomed a healthy baby boy and brought him home to a warm, dry apartment. Getting them to that point involved a protracted, frustrating tale of navigating agencies each with their own peculiar parameters and limitations, bureaucratic disconnects, overcoming lost jobs, broken down vehicles, cancelled cell phone service, and at times being the focus of impatience and belittlement. It required numerous in-person, in-field appearances, numerous roundtrip drives, and importantly the ability to provide modest material supports. It also required some luck, for better or worse. But it required an agency with the intersectionality, flexibility and creativity – and resources – to help this struggling family turn a corner. Having Reach-Up in-house was instrumental in the final months of the pregnancy.

The mother once said to me that she was desperate just to get a kind word. So I ask you, do the proposed budget cuts provide a kind word? Or can we do a hell of a lot better than that?

RCPCC has been successfully delivering an intersectionality of programming that, rather than being undermined or destroyed by government budgets, should properly be the experimental focus of our attempts to transform poverty. VCFCR and Reach-Up are essential pieces of the puzzle.

VCFCR needs work - it is a pilot and we should be paying attention and learning and adapting rather than letting the time, energy and resources go to waste. One of the objectives was to improve relationships between the PCC and DCF - I believe this was very successful in our case. We have good solid success stories that will save the state a great deal of money over time. Working together, we have identified critical needs, such as inadequate services for children 6 and up - and we are positioned to help build frameworks for addressing these needs. This is not time to scuttle developing partnerships moving in positive directions.