

Heather Wilson

I am here to speak on behalf of the Parent Child Center Network. The 15 parent child centers (PCCs) across the state of Vermont are struggling non-profits that provide essential prevention and intervention services to families. Some of the work by the Parent Child Center of NCSS, where I have worked for more than a decade, includes: therapy, home visiting, playgroups, parent education, the Youth for Change group for adolescents, and child care resources. The PCC network is seeking \$8 million to close the salary and funding gap across the PCC network, to ensure access for all Vermonters to our core services.

Two important PCC programs are close to being eliminated by a recent budget proposal from DCF Commissioner Schatz: 1) Reach Up and 2) Vermont Children & Families Community Response program (VCFCR). PCCs, which have been chronically underfunded, are fighting to keep these services for families and the jobs for our staff.

Every PCC has a Reach Up program which provides financial, employment and educational support to families. DCF Economic Services contracts with PCCs because we specialize with young parents. Our case managers have the small caseloads, patience, and dedication to provide intensive and individualized case management. Having Reach Up at the PCC means wrap-around support with other services, and in some places it also means access to on-site child care, training, and employment opportunities.

Vermont Children & Families Community Response is a pilot in Vermont, based on a successful program in Colorado. VCFCR works with families identified by DCF Family Services, which are at risk of future involvement with child welfare. Our skilled home visitors assist a family over a four month period to assess for needs and interventions. They link families to resources and supports designed to enhance their social networks, improve their financial situations, and increase protective factors for the children in the home.

It is important to salvage these two programs. Reach Up is the path many parents need toward successful employment and becoming a vital part of our workforce. VCFCR achieves positive outcomes by intervening early, rather than waiting for situations to worsen and risk families breaking apart. Please consider funding all requests from the Parent Child Center Network, and ensuring Reach Up and VCFCR for our communities. There are a lot of needs in our community and in our state, and when you question the best way to help families, PCCs are the answer.

Submitted by Heather Wilson, Highgate VT, Psychologist-Master