

Good Evening. My name is Leigh Dakin and I am the Board Chair for the Springfield Area Parent Child Center.

We are at a critical time as a state. It is vitally important to the health, stability and the long-term success of our Parent Child Centers to provide the adequate funding to maintain this important community resource.

The Parent Child Center Network is seeking \$1.5 million in increased Master Grant funding to ensure we have the ability to pay our workers sufficiently and stabilize our staffing. The PCCs also request \$1.5 million in one-time money to help with needed repairs and maintenance that has been put off for too long due to under-funding.

Parent Child Centers are able to offer voluntary wrap-around programming and are able to build relationships with families before, during and after a crisis in their lives.

Cutting funding to Reach Up or CIS (Children's Integrated Services) is unacceptable as these services are critically important to continuing to serve our most vulnerable populations. The Reach Up caseloads at the Parent Child Centers are not decreasing and the dynamic nature of the cases being served has increased.

Young parents and parents with young children are able to come into the Springfield Area Parent Child Center and get concrete supports such as food, diapers and clothing while also receiving support for housing, participating in parenting education and developmental supports for their children.

We respectfully request that the Parent Child Centers maintain all their current funding streams and start to be adequately funded in the Master Grant in order to continue the essential services and supports offered to families in our region.

Thank you,  
Leigh Dakin

## Creating Stronger Communities with a Strengths-based Approach

*Parent Child Centers (PCCs) are a network of 15 community-based nonprofit organizations serving all of Vermont. All PCCs, including Springfield Area Parent Child Center (SAPCC), deliver critical and essential state services to families with young children.*

Judy enters the lobby here at Springfield Area Parent Child Center (SAPCC) on a Tuesday afternoon to attend her parent education class. She's happy to be here, as evident by her bright smile. Mike comes in next and immediately begins to joke with Judy. Several other adults flow in through the front doors and head down the hall to the classroom. Their laughter can be heard across the center as they engage with several staff members and the friends they've made since finding their support system here many months ago.

Judy lost custody of her granddaughter last year and, thanks to the Department of Children and Families mandating that she take just *one* parenting class here at SAPCC, she is now on her fourth class and counting. She says she keeps coming back because she is hungry for more knowledge. She has learned to talk to her granddaughter in a "more compassionate way" because she now understands what her granddaughter is going through. Not only has she gained the tools she needs to raise her granddaughter, but she's gained the confidence in herself to do so, in part due to making social connections with other parents and guardians who are in similar situations as hers.

Mike also lost custody of his daughter last year and, like Judy, continues to reach out for the supports offered by SAPCC. He is currently taking his fifth parenting class. Mike, like many who are connected to a parent child center, has used numerous programs and services offered here, including Children's Integrated Services (CIS) to get family supports for his children's developmental health; as well as the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) service which provides concrete supports to families in times of need. Mike's family has also received specialized childcare, including transportation.

SAPCC, and all parent child centers, use a research-informed approach to provide these types of wrap-around services to countless families in the communities we serve. This multi-generational approach is called the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five key protective factors:


- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

Our goal in using this approach is to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse, neglect, and other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs have been linked to risky behaviors, chronic health conditions, and early death.

Both Judy and Mike have expressed that learning about ACEs and how to prevent them has been life-changing, admitting that they wish they had this knowledge before ever having children, but now that they understand how trauma impacts children, they can “help break the cycle.” They also made it very clear that SAPCC is not a place where you will be judged, but rather a place where you can be yourself and get the help you need. “SAPCC always has an answer, and if they don’t, they will direct you to who does.”

Judy will soon regain custody of her granddaughter, and Mike regained custody of his daughter in early 2019. The future is surely promising for these two, as well as the nearly 3000 individuals that SAPCC works with each year. Because of the resilience, social connections, knowledge and wrap-around supports that SAPCC provides to families; there’s no doubt that our communities are getting stronger.



  
Leigh Dakin, SAPCC Board Chair



Stacey Sanderson, SAPCC Parent Educator  
with students Judy and Mike