

Hello,

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.

My name is Jamaica White and I have been a Reach Up case manager at two Parent Child Centers: NCSS in St Albans and Lund in Burlington. I have intentionally continued to work at a PCC because of the added value I see in having Reach Up services imbedded in these centers. This is not to diminish the work that is done by case managers at the district office, but rather it works in symbiosis with them. At the PCC we work with a younger population that often needs a variety of supports that the PCC is in a good position to offer within the organization itself, no need for outside referrals, which adds comfort in the process and promotes ease of access.

Young parents often come onto Reach Up with significant needs for housing, childcare, transportation, education and employment. As an example here at Lund I can refer within our program for high school education, family education, childcare, community service placement, community clinical treatment, residential clinical treatment, and transitional housing. Lund also offers funding to help with incidental needs that fall outside the support services that the Reach Up program covers, such as childcare deposits, kids clothing and vouchers for furniture/household goods. Being able to access this wealth of resources within my own organization I believe is invaluable to achieving positive outcomes for our participants, and the data reflects that.

PCC Reach Up case manager do not just serve participants in their education needs. They provide comprehensive wrap around services that are tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable in our community, young parents who often lack natural supports and who may also be experiencing a variety of complicating factors. Imagine navigating your first job, your first referral to childcare, your first car. Now imagine doing that with no money and no one to explain the hidden rules that come with all of these things. That is the work that PCC case managers are doing. Preparing these young parents with real information on the systems they are going to need to navigate and giving them access to supports that can guide them through. The work that PCC case managers do with participants sets the stage for the work participants may later do at the district office. PCC case managers offer the stepping stones for these young families to find success and build supports for themselves and their children, and to prepare them for that next level. If this step is taken away, how will this change the outcomes for our families? Can we afford to take that risk?

I hope that you will take the time to think critically about the support that PCC Reach Up case managers provide. Reach Up has had a long standing contract with PCCs throughout Vermont because of the successes that those alliances provided- both for the state and for the participant. Vermont's youngest families deserve to have quality support that is tailored to their family's specific needs and they deserve to have it with case managers who have ease of access to these supports. The successes of this partnership should be emulated not defunded. Please take the time to think about the repercussions of such a decision and who it will hurt. I am not worried for my job, I am worried for how this will affect this young generation of participants and their children. I believe we owe it to participants to look at other options. If not then all Vermonters may suffer the consequences.

Jamaica White

Reach Up Housing Case Manager, Lund Family Center/Independence Place