

From: Tricia Coates <triciac@lundvt.org>

Sent: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 2:53 PM

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Subject: Budget Priorities for Vermont Families



To: Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee

Fr: Tricia Coates, Interim Executive Director, LUND

Date: May 5, 2020

Re: FY20 and FY21 Budget Priorities for Vermont Families

Thank you for all you are doing to continue to support Vermont and Vermonters through this unprecedented and unpredictable crisis.

I am very proud to report that even in this very challenging time of social distancing, Lund's clients continue to receive essential services in adoption, treatment, and family and child services. By finding the means to continue to serve clients, Lund has become an even more critical lifeline as families confront the pressures of stay at home orders.

As the State faces significant budget pressures closing out the current fiscal year and planning ahead for FY21, we urge you to keep the well-being of children and families – and the prevention of state dependence -- top of mind as a funding priority.

Specifically, the following services provide a critical safety net for many of Vermont's most vulnerable families. *Without them, the State is likely to experience increased dependence on the child welfare system, corrections, housing assistance, and the health care system.*

Safe and Supportive Child Care

The last few weeks have demonstrated how critical childcare is to a thriving society and economy. In order for Vermonters to return to work, and for children to be safe, supported in their growth, and secure, child care must be a priority of the State. Lund serves 50 children in its early childhood education program and opened in March at the Governor's request to serve the children of essential workers. Children and families need this support.

Critical State Funding: Child care subsidy (CCFAP), Act 166/Pre-K

Residential Mental Health and SUD Treatment for Parents

Residential treatment helps Vermonters succeed in reuniting their families, becoming employed, avoiding incarceration, and living independently. Lund's residential treatment program continues to achieve strong, successful outcomes for over fifty clients annually through mental health and substance use disorder treatment, life skills development and parenting skill-building. It is the only program in Vermont where a mother can access treatment with her children. Treatment has been uninterrupted for our residents as we have adapted our practices to the Governor's stay at home order.

Critical State Funding: Medicaid (PNMI), Economic Services, ADAP SUD outpatient treatment

Community-based SUD Treatment and SPOKE

Many Vermonters access Lund's substance use disorder treatment programs through our community-based clinicians and our SPOKE Clinical Care Coordinator. Vermont's opioid crisis and growing problems with stimulants have created a strong demand for SUD treatment. Lund's community clinicians provide a critical resource at this time. During the covid-19 stay at home orders, they have provided therapy via telehealth. For so many Vermonters who have turned their lives around with the help of therapy and Medication Assisted Treatment, and for the positive outcomes to the State when people enter recovery and become more independent, we strongly recommend continued State support so that we do not lose the progress we've made in the fight against opioid misuse.

Critical State Funding: ADAP outpatient treatment, SPOKE (Department of Vermont Health Access/Blueprint for Health/ ADAP

Project Family / Finalization Services

Adoption and support for adoptive families remains the most effective means for providing safety, security, and a sense of belonging for children in Vermont's foster care system. Lund's partnership with the State of Vermont, Project Family, annually supports 250-300 adoptions of children in foster care. Even during the Covid-19 stay at home order, Lund has supported the completion of 30 adoptions during this time. Funding reductions would result in fewer children finding permanent homes.

Critical State Funding: Project Family, Department for Children and Families

Child Focused Recruitment

Lund's Project Family staff have continued to be meet with youth who are waiting for a forever family. These children are currently residing in foster homes, and residential treatment facilities. These youth need and deserve the security of a forever family especially during these unprecedented times.

Critical State Funding: Project Family, Department for Children and Families

Post-Permanence Family Support

Lund's on-going support for families who have adopted children who were in the foster care system has been critical to family well-being and child welfare through this very challenging time. Stay at home orders and school closures have pressured families who are supporting children who have already faced significant uncertainty. Post permanence counselors stay connected with adoptive families, provide support and problem-solving. The ability of these children to engage in school and retain the security of their adoptive families often depends upon post-permanence support.

Critical State Funding: Post Permanence contract, Department for Children and Families

Parenting Education and Support

Lund's statewide child and family support services, including home visiting, High school education program, DCF Family services Regional Partnership Program, and Parent Child Center services are critical in reducing child abuse and neglect, family homelessness, parental substance misuse and mental illness, and crime as well as promoting health and wellness, optimal childhood development and school readiness, educational attainment and employment. These services help to reduce health care costs and have a positive impact on multiple generations. If children and families are going to get through this crisis and beyond and give our economy the best chance to recover, our families must continue to receive these services.

Critical State Funding: Parent-Child Center Master grant (PCC), AOE and school district payments, Children's Integrative Services (CIS), ADAP Block grant, Department for Children and Families Regional Partnership Program

Reduced Re-incarceration

Each of Lund's programs are designed to support independence, family reunification and well-being, and permanence for children. By providing parents with this support, Lund works to prevent incarceration and recidivism across the agency. Specifically with the KidsApart program, it supports incarcerated mothers by helping them stay connected with their children, while supporting the children and their caregivers through the incarceration period. Reducing Vermont's incarcerated population has become a priority through the Covid-19 crisis. Supporting better outcomes for incarcerated women and their children provides a substantial return on investment for Vermont.

Critical State Funding: Department of Corrections grant: KidsApart parenting program

The essential services Lund provides families improves lives and prevents reliance on much more costly state-funded programs. We stand at-the-ready to continue our partnership with the State in treatment, adoption, and child and family services that has improved so many lives and offered prevention that helps Vermont avoid expensive dependence.

Thank you for considering the families and clients we serve. Please call me directly if I can provide further information.

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