

Memorandum

To: Senate Appropriations Committee
From: Ken Schatz, DCF Commissioner
Re: S.263 – An act relating to the Parent Child Network
Date: February 26, 2020

Overview of Parent Child Centers

History

The first Parent Child Center (PCC) was founded in Addison County in 1980. At the time, it was funded through the federal Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs with a focus on providing quality child care and services for Addison County families with children under the age of three. In 1988, the State of Vermont appropriated funds to PCCs for the first time, with a total of eight centers receiving funds that year.

In 2020, there are now 15 PCCs across Vermont serving all families and children, with a special focus on families with young children, young parents, and pregnant and parenting teens (see list at end of memo). PCCs are independent nonprofit organizations, or programs within nonprofits such as a designated agency or a community action agency. Each Center provides a range of supports and services for young parents and young children through the Centers' own programs. They also act as clearing houses and referral sources for a variety of other state and other nonprofit services.

All PCCs share a core philosophy and a core set of services. The goals are to help families get off to a healthy start; promote well-being; welcome babies; build on family strengths; and prevent problems like illiteracy, poor health, welfare dependence, family violence, or sexual, physical and emotional abuse that have proven to be so costly to our society in human and in financial terms.

All PCCs are committed to providing, at a minimum, the eight core services described below, either directly or through referral. Each PCC provides a physical presence in its community, a welcoming place for families with young children. In addition, each PCC includes parents and community members on boards and committees that govern the Centers. Please see our 2019 report: <https://ljfo.vermont.gov/assets/Uploads/5e3be7ac74/PCC-Legislative-Report-final-v2.pdf>

Funding

Starting in January 2017, the Parent Child Centers (PCCs) have been paid through a master grant that funds their eight core services. Each PCC structures and delivers these core services differently to best meet the needs of their community. The total master grant for PCCs is currently \$3.5 million; the allocation to each PCC is determined through the master grant contract. The master grant can be considered base or core funding for the 15 PCCs, but each PCC has other private and public funding sources for other services they provide to their community. DCF funds many of these other services.



S.263 – An act relating to the Parent Child Center Network

AHS/DCF opposes the bill as written, however, we believe there is value in clarifying the role of the PCCs in the system of care for families and children. We also support the concept of a PCC Network who would administer grants to individual PCCs and ensure accountability among the PCCs. For this reason, we recommend a legislative study committee to examine this issue and draft a bill with input from both AHS/DCF, the PCCs, and families.

The following issues are of concern for AHS/DCF:

1. The \$7.5 million appropriation to the PCC Network in SFY21 and the requirement that AHS use an additional annual inflation factor when determining annual appropriation to the PCC Network. This appropriation was not included in Governor's recommended budget.
2. Programmatic and fiscal implications including the potential for duplication of services, and nonconformity with Bulleting 5.0 should the grant administration be done by the PCC Network.
3. The bill allows for designation of new PCCs – currently there are 15 PCCs. AHS/DCF supports consolidation of existing PCCs from 15 to 12 or fewer, not the expansion of new Centers.
4. The bill lists the eight core services – two of these include Home Visiting and Early Childhood Services (childcare). Currently, home visiting is provided through Children's Integrated Services (CIS) and at the Vermont Department of Health. This would be a duplication of services. Many of the PCCs provide childcare services that are separately funded through the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.
5. AHS/DCF does not support listing the PCCs' eight core services in statute. The statute should include language about the purpose and goals for PCCs, such as the prevention of child abuse and neglect.
6. The bill shifts grant administration, monitoring and oversight from DCF's Child Development Division to the PCC Network who reports to the Secretary of AHS. DCF is seeking the clarification of roles between AHS, the PCC Network, and the PCCs.

Consequently, DCF believes a summer workgroup consisting of legislators, PCCs, AHS/DCF and families should be considered to discuss and clarify the role of PCCs in the system of care for children and families, and the perspective roles and responsibilities of the PCC Network and AHS/DCF. The expectation would be for the workgroup to make recommendations on statutory language, policy and practice changes consistent with the agreed upon roles and responsibilities.





List of Parent Child Centers:

1. Addison County Parent Child Center
2. Family Center of Washington County
3. The Family Place in Norwich
4. Lamoille Family Center
5. NEKCA/PCC South in St. Johnsbury
6. NEKCA/PCC North in Newport
7. Family Center of Northwestern VT in St. Albans
8. Springfield Area Parent Child Center
9. Sunrise Family Resource Center in Bennington
10. Early Education Services in Windham
11. Lund
12. Milton Family Community Center
13. Rutland County PCC
14. Orange County PCC
15. The Janet S. Munt Family Room in Burlington

