



## Testimony: Senate Health and Welfare

Patricia Coates, Interim Executive Director

Thursday, April 9, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to join the Committee today, and for your on-going support for the work of frontline childcare, family services, and mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers during this pandemic.

[Lund](#) is pleased to have reopened our Early Childhood Program for children of essential workers. Some updates:

- As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, there were 9 children enrolled in our center with parents who are deemed essential workers. 7 out of 14 teachers were appropriate (not in a high risk category) and willing to return to the center to provide care for children if needed.
- On Monday, March 30th we opened the center back up to begin caring for those qualifying families, serving one child with two teachers that day. The following day we were caring for 3 children and it increased to 5 by Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 6 children on April 8<sup>th</sup>.
- We continue to have two teachers providing this care. Once we go up to 7, we will need to add another teacher.
- All families and the teachers are prescreened before they enter the center daily, including taking temperatures.
- At this time the children on site are cared for in only 1 classroom and use one bathroom and are restricted to one playground. Parents are bringing prepared lunches so that we do not have to use our kitchen at this time.
- Teachers are doing additional thorough cleaning daily and we use a janitorial service for overnight, deeper cleaning.
- About half of our private pay families who are unable to return are continuing to pay 50% of their tuition to hold their slots, the remainder have had to un-enroll as they cannot cover this cost at this time.
- We continue to explore whether to open up another room and begin to serve families that were previously not enrolled in our program. We understand there is a high demand especially for essential worker infant and toddler care in Chittenden County specifically, and are looking at how we could prioritize this need.

In normal times, Lund's Early Childhood Program is central to the range of services we provide for our clients. We, too, are concerned about the long-term viability of the child care business in Vermont. In the meantime, the State's support of this emergency re-opening and continued funding commitment give us the opportunity to plan for the future.

As an agency, Lund doesn't fit neatly into the category of "Designated Agency" or "Long Term Care" facility. We provide direct services to families across the state in partnership with the Departments of Children and Family Services, Corrections, and ADAP, and we touch 5,000 Vermonters annually. At this

time, most of our services have transitioned to virtual platforms and our staff have worked diligently to maintain connections with families who are under tremendous stress. Our Parent Child Center services continue, with ongoing education and support for the families of incarcerated women and families at risk for substance use disorder. Our Project Family adoption services continue, with 20 adoptions for children in foster care finalized in March alone.

Our most intense Covid-19 response planning has focused on keeping clients and staff safe and healthy in our residential treatment program, serving 26 mothers and 28 children, and at Independence Place, our transitional housing program that is winding down but still serves 6 families. With significant protocols in place, no clients or staff have tested positive. We are prepared with two offsite recovery locations, if needed. [Please follow our Covid-19 response work here.](#)

I am so impressed with the determination of all Lund staff who are working harder than ever to support our families through a very challenging time, many in direct contact with clients. Expenses related to our Covid-19 response, altered service delivery, and impact on development are sure to impact Lund's finances for the foreseeable future. Ongoing reimbursement and flexibility from state agencies will remain critical, as will assistance from the federal Paycheck Protection Act.

Thank you for remembering Lund and our staff and clients during this crisis.